"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

A WEEKLY JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED HOUSEHOLD WORDS.

No. 142.] SATURDAY, JANUARY 11, 1862. [PRICE 2d.

A STRANGE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MY NOVEL," "RIENZI," &c.

CHAPTER LVII.

MRS. POYNTZ was on her favourite seat by the window, and, for a wonder, not knitting—that classic task seemed done; but she was smoothing and folding the completed work with her white comely hand, and smiling over it, as if in complacent approval, when I entered the room. At the fireside sat the he-colonel, inspecting a newly-invented barometer; at another window, in the farthest recess of the room, stood Miss Jane Poyntz, with a young gentleman whom I had never before seen, but who turned his eyes full upon me with a haughty look as the servant announced my name. He was tall, well proportioned, decidedly handsome, but with that expression of cold and concentred self-esteem in his very attitude, as well as his countenance, which makes a man of merit unpopular, a man without merit ridiculous.

The he-colonel, always punctiliously civil, rose from his seat, shook hands with me cordially, and said, "Coldish weather to-day; but we shall have rain to-morrow. Rainy seasons come in cycles. We are about to commence a cycle of them with heavy showers." He sighed, and returned to his barometer.

Miss Jane bowed to me graciously enough, but was evidently a little confused, a circumstance which might well attract my notice, for I had never before seen that high-bred young lady deviate a hair's breadth from the even tenour of a manner admirable for a cheerful and courteous ease, which one felt convinced would be unaltered to those around her if an earthquake swallowed one up an inch before her feet.

The young gentleman continued to eye me loftily, as the heir-apparent to some celestial planet might eye an inferior creature from a half-formed nebula suddenly dropped upon his sublime and perfected star.

Mrs. Poyntz extended to me two fingers, and said, frigidly, "Delighted to see you again! How kind to attend so soon to my note!" Motioning me to a seat beside her, she here turned to her husband, and said, "Poyntz, since a cycle of rain begins to-morrow, better secure your ride to-day. Take these young people with you. I want to talk with Dr. Fenwick."

The colonel carefully put away his barometer, and saying to his daughter "Come!" went forth. Jane followed her father; the young gentleman followed Jane.

The reception I had met chilled and disappointed me. I felt that Mrs. Poyntz was changed, and in her change the whole house seemed changed. The very chairs looked civilly unfriendly, as if preparing to turn their backs on me. However, I was not in the false position of an intruder; I had been summoned; it was for Mrs. Poyntz to speak first, and I waited quietly for her to do so.

She finished the careful folding of her work, and then laid it at rest in the drawer of the table at which she sate. Having so done, she turned to me, and said,

"By the way, I ought to have introduced to you my young guest, Mr. Ashleigh Sumner. You would like him. He has talents—not showy, but solid. He will succeed in public life."

"So that young man is Mr. Ashleigh Sumner? I do not wonder that Miss Ashleigh rejected him."

I said this, for I was nettled, as well as surprised, at the coolness with which a lady who had professed a friendship for me mentioned that fortunate young gentleman, with so complete an oblivion of all the antecedents that had once made his name painful to my ear.

In turn, my answer seemed to nettle Mrs. Poyntz.

"I am not so sure that she did reject; perhaps she rather misunderstood him; gallant compliments are not always proposals of marriage. However that be, his spirits were not much damped by Miss Ashleigh's disdain, nor his heart deeply smitten by her charms, for he is now very happy, very much attached to another young lady, to whom he proposed, three days ago, at Lady Delafield's, and, not to make a mystery of what all our little world will know before to-morrow, that young lady is my daughter Jane."

"Were I acquainted with Mr. Sumner, I should offer to *him* my sincere congratulation."

Mrs. Poyntz resumed, without heeding a reply more complimentary to Miss Jane than to the object of her choice:

"I told you that I meant Jane to marry a rich country gentleman, and Ashleigh Sumner is the very country gentleman I had then in my thoughts. He is cleverer and more ambitious

than I could have hoped: he will be a minister some day, in right of his talents, and a peer if he wishes it, in right of his lands. So that matter is settled."

There was a pause, during which my mind passed rapidly through links of reminiscence and reasoning, which led me to a mingled sentiment of admiration for Mrs. Poyntz as a diplomatist and of distrust for Mrs. Poyntz as a friend. It was now clear why Mrs. Poyntz, before so little disposed to approve my love, had urged me at once to offer my hand to Lilian, in order that she might depart affianced and engaged to the house in which she would meet Mr. Ashleigh Sumner. Hence, Mrs. Poyntz's anxiety to obtain all the information I could afford her of the sayings and doings at Lady Haughton's; hence, the publicity she had so suddenly given to my engagement; hence, when Mr. Sumner had gone away, a rejected suitor, her own departure from L——; she had seized the very moment when a vain and proud man, piqued by the mortification received from one lady, falls the easier prey to the arts which allure his suit to another. All was so far clear to me. And I—was my self-conceit less egregious and less readily duped than that of yon gilded popinjay's! How skilfully this woman had knitted me into her work with the noiseless turn of her white hands! and yet, forsooth, I must vaunt the superior scope of my intellect, and plumb all the fountains of Nature—I, who could not fathom the little pool of this female schemer's mind!

But that was no time for resentment to her or rebuke for myself. She was now the woman who could best protect and save from slander my innocent, beloved Lilian. But how approach that perplexing subject?

Mrs. Poyntz approached it, and with her usual decision of purpose which bore so deceitful a likeness to candour of mind.

"But it was not to talk of my affairs that I asked you to call, Allen Fenwick." As she uttered my name, her voice softened, and her manner took that maternal, caressing tenderness which had sometimes amused and sometimes misled me. "No, I do not forget that you asked me to be your friend, and I take, without scruple, the license of friendship. What are these stories that I have heard already about Lilian Ashleigh, to whom you were once engaged?"

"To whom I am still engaged."

"Is it possible? Oh, then, of course the stories I have heard are all false. Very likely; no fiction in scandal ever surprises me. Poor dear Lilian, then, never ran away from her mother's house?"

I smothered the angry pain which this mode of questioning caused me; I knew how important it was to Lilian to secure to her the countenance and support of this absolute autocrat; I spoke of Lilian's long previous distemper of mind; I accounted for it as any intelligent physician, unacquainted with all that I could not reveal, would account. Heaven forgive me for the venial falsehood, but I spoke of the terrible charge against myself as enough to unhinge, for a time, the intellect of a girl so acutely sensitive as Lilian; I sought to create that impression as to the origin of all that might otherwise seem strange; and in this state of cerebral excitement she had wandered from home—but alone. I had tracked every step of her way; I had found and restored her to her home. A critical delirium had followed, from which she now rose, cured in health, unsuspicious that there could be a whisper against her name. And then, with all the eloquence I could command, and in words as adapted as I could frame them to soften the heart of a woman, herself a mother, I implored Mrs. Poyntz's aid to silence all the cruelties of calumny, and extend her shield over the child of her own early friend.

When I came to an end, I had taken, with caressing force, Mrs. Poyntz's reluctant hands in mine. There were tears in my voice, tears in my eyes. And the first sound of her voice in reply gave me hope, for it was unusually gentle. She was evidently moved. The hope was soon quelled.

"Allen Fenwick," she said, "you have a noble heart, I grieve to see how it abuses your reason. I cannot aid Lilian Ashleigh in the way you ask. Do not start back so indignantly. Listen to me as patiently as I have listened to you. That when you brought back the unfortunate young woman to her poor mother, her mind was disordered, and became yet more dangerously so, I can well believe; that she is now recovered, and thinks with shame, or refuses to think at all, of her imprudent flight, I can believe also; but I do not believe, the World cannot believe, that she did not, knowingly and purposely, quit her mother's roof, and in quest of that young stranger so incautiously, so unfeelingly admitted to her mother's house during the very time you were detained on the most awful of human accusations. Every one in the town knows that Mr. Margrave visited daily at Mrs. Ashleigh's during that painful period; every one in the town knows in what strange, out-of-the-way place this young man had niched himself; and that a yacht was bought, and lying in wait there. What for? It is said that the chaise in which you brought Miss Ashleigh back to her home was hired at a village within an easy reach of Mr. Margrave's lodging—of Mr. Margrave's yacht. I rejoice that you saved the poor girl from ruin: but her good name is tarnished, and if Anne Ashleigh, whom I sincerely pity, asks me my advice, I can but give her this: 'Leave L——, take your daughter abroad, and if she is not to marry Mr. Margrave, marry her as quietly and as quickly as possible to some foreigner.'"

"Madam! madam! this, then, is your friendship to her—to me! Oh, shame on you to insult thus an affianced husband! Shame on me ever to have thought you had a heart!"

"A heart, man!" she exclaimed, almost fiercely, springing up, and startling me with the change in her countenance and voice. "And little you would have valued, and pitilessly have

crushed this heart, if I had suffered myself to show it to you! What right have you to reproach me? I felt a warm interest in your career, an unusual attraction in your conversation and society. Do you blame me for that, or should I blame myself? Condemned to live amongst brainless puppets, my dull occupation to pull the strings that moved them, it was a new charm to my life to establish friendship and intercourse with intellect, and spirit, and courage. Ah, I understand that look, half incredulous, half inquisitive."

"Inquisitive, no! incredulous, yes! You desired my friendship, and how does your harsh judgment of my betrothed wife prove either to me or to her mother, whom you have known from your girlhood, the first duty of a friend, which is surely not that of leaving a friend's side the moment that he needs countenance in calumny, succour in trouble."

"It is a better duty to prevent the calumny and avert the trouble. Leave aside Anne Ashleigh, a cipher that I can add or subtract from my sum of life as I please. What is my duty to yourself? It is plain. It is to tell you that your honour commands you to abandon all thoughts of Lilian Ashleigh as your wife. Ungrateful that you are! Do you suppose it was no mortification to my pride of woman and friend, that you never approached me in confidence except to ask my good offices in promoting your courtship to another? No shock to the quiet plans I had formed as to our familiar though harmless intimacy, to hear that you were bent on a marriage in which my friend would be lost to me?"

"Not lost!—not lost! On the contrary, the regard I must suppose you had for Lilian would have been a new link between our homes."

"Pooh! Between me and that dreamy girl there could have been no sympathy, there could have grown up no regard. You would have been chained to your fireside, and—and—but no matter. I stifled my disappointment as soon as I felt it—stifled it, as all my life I have stifled that which either destiny or duty—duty to myself as to others—forbids me to indulge. Ah, do not fancy me one of the weak criminals who can suffer a worthy liking to grow into a debasing love. I was not in love with you, Allen Fenwick."

"Do you think I was ever so presumptuous a coxcomb as to fancy it?"

"No," she said, more softly; "I was not so false to my household ties and to my own nature. But there are some friendships which are as jealous as love. I could have cheerfully aided you in any choice which my sense could have approved for you as wise; I should have been pleased to have found in such a wife my most intimate companion. But that silly child!—absurd! Nevertheless, the freshness and enthusiasm of your love touched me; you asked my aid, and I gave it—perhaps I did believe that when you saw more of Lilian Ashleigh you would be cured of a fancy conceived by the eye—I should have known better what dupes the wisest men can be to the witcheries of a fair face and eighteen! When I found your illusion obstinate, I wrenched myself away from a vain regret, turned to my own schemes and my own ambition, and smiled bitterly to think that in pressing you to propose so hastily to Lilian, I made your blind passion an agent in my own plans. Enough of this. I speak thus openly and boldly to you now because now I have not a sentiment that can interfere with the dispassionate soundness of my counsels. I repeat, you cannot now marry Lilian Ashleigh; I cannot take my daughter to visit her; I cannot destroy the social laws that I myself have set in my petty kingdom."

"Be it as you will. I have pleaded for her while she is still Lilian Ashleigh. I plead for no one to whom I have once given my name. Before the woman whom I have taken from the altar, I can place, as a shield sufficient, my strong breast of man. Who has so deep an interest in Lilian's purity as I have? Who is so fitted to know the exact truth of every whisper against her? Yet when I, whom you admit to have some reputation for shrewd intelligence,—I, who tracked her way,—I, who restored her to her home,—when I, Allen Fenwick, am so assured of her inviolable innocence in thought as in deed, that I trust my honour to her keeping,—surely, surely, I confute the scandal which you yourself do not believe though you refuse to reject and to annul it."

"Do not deceive yourself, Allen Fenwick," said she, still standing beside me, her countenance now hard and stern. "Look, where I stand, I am The World! The World, not as satirists depreciate or as optimists extol its immutable properties, its all-pervasive authority. I am The World! And my voice is the World's voice when it thus warns you. Should you make this marriage, your dignity of character and position would be gone!—if you look only to lucre and professional success, possibly *they* may not ultimately suffer. You have skill, which men need; their need may still draw patients to your door and pour guineas into your purse. But you have the pride, as well as the birth, of a gentleman, and the wounds to that pride will be hourly chafed and never healed. Your strong breast of man, has no shelter to the frail name of woman. The World, in its health, will look down on your wife, though its sick may look up to you. This is not all. The World, in its gentlest mood of indulgence, will say, compassionately, 'Poor man! how weak, and how deceived! What an unfortunate marriage!' But the World is not often indulgent, it looks most to the motives most seen on the surface. And the World will more frequently say, 'No, much too clever a man to be duped. Miss Ashleigh had money. A good match to the man who liked gold better than honour.'"

I sprang to my feet, with difficulty suppressing my rage, and, remembering it was a woman who spoke to me, "Farewell, madam," said I, through my grinded teeth. "Were you, indeed, the Personation of The World, whose mean notions you mouth so calmly, I could not disdain you more." I turned to the door, and left her still standing

erect and menacing, the hard sneer on her resolute lip, the red glitter in her remorseless eye.

CHAPTER LVIII.

If ever my heart vowed itself to Lilian, the vow was now the most trustful and the most sacred. I had relinquished our engagement before, but then her affection seemed, no matter from what cause, so estranged from me, that though I might be miserable to lose her, I deemed that she would be unhappy in our union. Then, too, she was the gem and darling of the little world in which she lived; no whisper assailed her; now, I knew that she loved me. I knew that her estrangement had been involuntary, I knew that appearances wronged her, and that they never could be explained. I was in the true position of man to woman: I was the shield, the bulwark, the fearless confiding protector! Resign her now because the world babbled, because my career might be impeded, because my good name might be impeached—resign her, and, in that resignation, confirm all that was said against her! Could I do so, I should be the most craven of gentlemen, the meanest of men!

I went to Mrs. Ashleigh, and entreated her to hasten my union with her daughter, and fix the marriage day.

I found the poor lady dejected and distressed. She was now sufficiently relieved from the absorbing anxiety for Lilian to be aware of the change on the face of that World which the woman I had just quitted personified and concentred; she had learned the cause from the bloodless lips of Miss Brabazon.

"My child—my poor child!" murmured the mother. "And she so guileless—so sensitive! Could she know what is said, it would kill her. She would never marry you, Allen. She would never bring shame to you!"

"She never need learn the barbarous calumny. Give her to me, and at once; patients, fortune, fame, are not found only at L——. Give her to me at once. But let me name a condition: I have a patrimonial independence — I have amassed large savings—I have my profession and my repute. I cannot touch her fortune—I cannot—never can! Take it while you live; when you die, leave it to accumulate for her children, if children she have; not to me; not to her—unless I am dead or ruined!"

"Oh, Allen, what a heart!—what a heart! No, not heart, Allen—that bird in its cage has a heart: *soul*—what a soul!"

CHAPTER LIX.

How innocent was Lilian's virgin blush when I knelt to her and prayed that she would forestall the date that had been fixed for our union, and be my bride before the breath of the autumn had withered the pomp of the woodland and silenced the song of the birds. Meanwhile, I was so fearfully anxious that she should risk no danger of hearing, even of surmising, the cruel slander against her—should meet no cold contemptuous looks — above all, should be safe from the barbed talk of Mrs. Poyntz—that I insisted on the necessity of immediate change of air and scene. I proposed that we should all three depart, the next day, for the banks of my own beloved and native Windermere. By that pure mountain air Lilian's health would be soon re-established; in the church hallowed to me by the graves of my fathers our vows could be plighted. No calumny had ever cast a shadow over those graves. I felt as if my bride would be safer in the neighbourhood of my mother's tomb.

I carried my point: it was so arranged. Mrs. Ashleigh, however, was reluctant to leave before she had seen her dear friend, Margaret Poyntz. I had not the courage to tell her what she might expect to hear from that dear friend, but, as delicately as I could, I informed her that I had already seen the Queen of the Hill, and contradicted the gossip that had reached her; but that as yet, like other absolute sovereigns, the Queen of the Hill thought it politic to go with the popular stream, reserving all check on its direction till the rush of its torrent might slacken; and that it would be infinitely wiser in Mrs. Ashleigh to postpone conversation with Mrs. Poyntz until Lilian's return to L—— as my wife; slander by that time would have wearied itself out, and Mrs. Poyntz (assuming her friendship to Mrs. Ashleigh to be sincere) would then be enabled to say with authority to her subjects, "Dr. Fenwick alone knows the facts of the story, and his marriage with Miss Ashleigh refutes all the gossip to her prejudice."

I made, that evening, arrangements with a young and rising practitioner; to secure attendance on my patients during my absence. I passed the greater part of the night in drawing up memoranda to guide my proxy in each case, however humble the sufferer. This task finished, I chanced, in searching for a small microscope, the wonders of which I thought might interest and amuse Lilian, to open a drawer in which I kept the manuscript of my cherished Physiological Work, and, in so doing, my eye fell upon the wand which I had taken from Margrave. I had thrown it into that drawer on my return home after restoring Lilian to her mother's house, and, in the anxiety which had subsequently preyed upon my mind, had almost forgotten the strange possession I had as strangely acquired. There it now lay, the instrument of agencies over the mechanism of nature which no doctrine admitted by my philosophy could accept, side by side with the presumptuous work which had analysed the springs by which nature is moved, and decided the principles by which reason metes out, from the inch of its knowledge, the plan of the Infinite Unknown.

I took up the wand, and examined it curiously. It was evidently the work of an age far remote from our own, scored over with half-obliterated characters in some Eastern tongue, perhaps no longer extant. I found that it was hollow within. A more accurate observation showed, in the

centre of this hollow, an exceedingly fine thread-like wire, the unattached end of which would slightly touch the palm when the wand was taken into the hand. Was it possible that there might be a natural and even a simple cause for the effects which this instrument produced? Could it serve to collect, from that great focus of animal heat and nervous energy which is placed in the palm of the human hand, some such latent fluid as that which Reichenbach calls the "odic," and which, according to him, "rushes through and pervades universal Nature?" After all, why not? For how many centuries lay unknown all the virtues of the loadstone and the amber? It is but as yesterday that the forces of vapour have become to men genii more powerful than those conjured up by Aladdin; that light, at a touch, springs forth from invisible air; that thought finds a messenger swifter than the wings of the fabled Afrite. As, thus musing, my hand closed over the wand, I felt a wild thrill through my frame. I recoiled; I was alarmed lest (according to the plain common-sense theory of Julius Faber) I might be preparing my imagination to form and to credit its own illusions. Hastily I laid down the wand. But then it occurred to me, that whatever its properties, it had so served the purposes of the dread Fascinator from whom it had been taken, that he might probably seek to re-possess himself of it; he might contrive to enter my house in my absence; more prudent to guard in my own watchful keeping the incomprehensible instrument of incomprehensible arts. I resolved, therefore, to take the wand with me, and placed it in my travelling-trunk with such effects as I selected for use in the excursion that was to commence with the morrow. I now laid down to rest, but I could not sleep. The recollections of the painful interview with Mrs. Poyntz became vivid and haunting. It was clear that the sentiment she had conceived for me was that of no simple friendship—something more or something less—but certainly something else; and this conviction brought before me that proud hard face, disturbed by a pang wrestled against but not subdued, and that clear metallic voice, troubled by the quiver of an emotion which, perhaps, she had never analysed to herself. I did not need her own assurance to know that this sentiment was not to be confounded with a love which she would have despised as a weakness and repelled as a crime; it was an inclination of the intellect, not a passion of the heart. But still it admitted a jealousy little less keen than that which has love for its cause; so true it is that jealousy is never absent where self-love is always present. Certainly it was no susceptibility of sober friendship which had made the stern arbitress of a coterie ascribe to her interest in me her pitiless judgment of Lilian. Strangely enough, with the image of this archetype of conventional usages and the trite social life, came that of the mysterious Margrave, surrounded by all the attributes with which superstition clothes the being of the shadowy border land that lies beyond the chart of our visual world itself. By what link were creatures so dissimilar riveted together in the metaphysical chain of association? Both had entered into the record of my life when my life admitted its own first romance of love. Through the aid of this cynical schemer I had been made known to Lilian. At her house I had heard the dark story of that Louis Grayle, with whom, in mocking spite of my reason, conjectures (which that very reason must depose itself before it could resolve into distempered fancies) identified the enigmatical Margrave. And now both she, the representative of the formal world most opposed to visionary creeds, and he, who gathered round him all the terrors which haunt the realm of fable, stood united against me—foes with whom the intellect I had so haughtily cultured knew not how to cope. Whatever assault I might expect from either, I was unable to assail again. Alike, then, in this, are the Slander and the Phantom; that which appals us most in their power over us is our impotence against them.

But up rose the sun, chasing the shadows from the earth, and brightening insensibly the thoughts of man. After all, Margrave had been baffled and defeated, whatever the arts he had practised and the secrets he possessed. It was, at least, doubtful whether his evil machinations would be renewed. He had seemed so incapable of long-sustained fixity of purpose, that it was probable he was already in pursuit of some new agent or victim; and as to this common-place and conventional spectre, the so-called World, if it is everywhere to him whom it awes, it is nowhere to him who despises it. What was the good or bad word of a Mrs. Poyntz to me? Ay, but to Lilian? There, indeed, I trembled; but still even in trembling it was sweet to think that my home would be her shelter—my choice her vindication. Ah, how unutterably tender and reverential Love becomes when it assumes the duties of the guardian, and hallows its own heart into a sanctuary of refuge for the beloved!

CHAPTER IX.

The beautiful lake! We two are on its grassy margin. Twilight melting into night; the stars stealing forth, one after one. What a wonderful change is made within us when we come from our callings amongst men, chafed, wearied, wounded; gnawed by our cares, perplexed by the doubts of our very wisdom, stung by the adder that dwells in cities—Slander; nay, even if renowned, fatigued with the burden of the very names that we have won; what a change is made within us when suddenly we find ourselves transported into the calm solitudes of Nature; —into scenes familiar to our happy dreaming childhood; back, back from the dusty thoroughfares of our toil-worn manhood to the golden fountain of our youth! Blessed is the change, even when we have no companion beside us to whom the heart can whisper its sense of relief and joy. But if the One, in whom all our future

is garnered up, be with us there, instead of that weary World which has so magically vanished away from the eye and the thought, then does the change make one of those rare epochs of life in which the charm is the stillness. In the pause from all, by which our own turbulent struggles for happiness trouble existence, we feel with a rapt amaze how calm a thing it is to be happy. And so as the night, in deepening, brightened, Lilian and I wandered by the starry lake. Conscious of no evil in ourselves, how secure we felt from evil! A few days more—a few days more, and we two should be as one. And that thought we uttered in many forms of words, brooding over it in the long intervals of enamoured silence.

And when we turned back to the quiet inn at which we had taken up our abode, and her mother, with her soft face, advanced to meet us, I said to Lilian:

"Would that in these scenes we could fix our home for life, away and afar from the dull town we have left behind us, with the fret of its wearying cares and the jar of its idle babble!"

"And why not, Allen? Why not? But no, you would not be happy."

"Not be happy, and with you? Sceptic! by what reasonings do you arrive at that ungracious conclusion?"

"The heart loves repose and the soul contemplation, but the mind needs action. Is it not so?"

"Where learned you that aphorism, out of place on such rosy lips!"

"I learned it in studying you," murmured Lilian, tenderly.

Here Mrs. Ashleigh joined us. For the first time I slept under the same roof as Lilian. And I forgot that the universe contained an enigma to solve or an enemy to fear.

CHAPTER LXI.

TWENTY days—the happiest my life had ever known—thus glided on. Apart from the charm which love bestows on the beloved, there was that in Lilian's conversation which made her a delightful companion. Whether it was that, in this pause from the toils of my career, my mind could more pliantly supple itself to her graceful imagination, or that her imagination itself was less vague and dreamy amidst those rural scenes which realised in their loveliness and grandeur its long-conceived ideals, than it had been in the petty garden-ground neighboured by the stir and hubbub of the busy town,—in much that I had once slighted or contemned as the vagaries of undisciplined fancy, I now recognised the sparkle and play of an intuitive genius lighting up many a depth obscure to instructed thought. It is with some characters as with the subtler and more ethereal order of poets. To appreciate them we must suspend the course of artificial life. In the city we call them dreamers, on the mountain-top we find them interpreters.

In Lilian, the sympathy with Nature was not, as in Margrave, from the joy and sense of Nature's lavish vitality, it was refined into exquisite perception of the diviner spirit by which that vitality is informed. Thus, like the artist, from outward forms of beauty she drew forth the covert types, lending to things the most familiar exquisite meanings unconceived before. For it is truly said by a wise critic of old, that "the attribute of Art is to suggest infinitely more than it expresses," and such suggestions, passing from the artist's innermost thought into the mind that receives them, open on and on into the Infinite of Ideas, as a moonlit wave struck by a passing oar impels wave upon wave along one track of light.

So the days glided by, and brought the eve of our bridal morn. It had been settled that, after the ceremony (which was to be performed by license in the village church, at no great distance, which adjoined my paternal home now passed away to strangers), we should make a short excursion into Scotland; leaving Mrs. Ashleigh to await our return at the little inn.

I had retired to my own room to answer some letters from anxious patients, and having finished these, I looked into my trunk for a Guide-Book to the North, which I had brought with me. My hand came upon Margrave's wand, and remembering that strange thrill which had passed through me when I last handled it, I drew it forth, resolved to examine calmly if I could detect the cause of the sensation. It was not now the time of night in which the imagination is most liable to credulous impressions, nor was I now in the anxious and jaded state of mind in which such impressions may be the more readily conceived. The sun was slowly setting over the delicious landscape; the air cool and serene; my thoughts collected; heart and conscience alike at peace. I took, then, the wand, and adjusted it to the palm of the hand as I had done before. I felt the slight touch of the delicate wire within, and again the thrill! I did not this time recoil; I continued to grasp the wand, and sought deliberately to analyse my own sensations in the contact. There came over me an increased consciousness of vital power; a certain exhiliration, elasticity, vigour, such as a strong cordial may produce on a fainting man. All the forces of my frame seemed refreshed, redoubled; and as such effects on the physical system are ordinarily accompanied by correspondent effects on the mind, so I was sensible of a proud elation of spirits, a kind of defying, superb self-glorying. All fear seemed blotted out from my thought, as a weakness impossible to the grandeur and might which belong to Intellectual Man; I felt as if it were a royal delight to scorn Earth and its opinions, brave Hades and its spectres. Rapidly this new-born arrogance enlarged itself into desires vague but daring; my mind reverting to the wild phenomena associated with its memories of Margrave, I said, half-aloud, "If a creature so beneath myself in constancy of will and completion of thought can wrest from Nature

favours so marvellous, what could not be won from her by me, her patient persevering seeker? What if there be spirits around and about, invisible to the common eye, but whom we can submit to our control, and what if this rod be charged with some occult fluid, that runs through all creation, and can be so disciplined as to establish communication wherever life and thought can reach to beings that live and think! So would the mystics of old explain what perplexes me. Am I sure that the mystics of old duped themselves or their pupils? This, then, this slight wand, light as a reed in my grasp, this, then, was the instrument by which Margrave sent his irresistible will through air and space, and by which I smote himself, in the midst of his tiger-like wrath, into the helplessness of a sick man's swoon! Can the instrument at this distance still control him; if now meditating evil, disarm and disable his purpose?" Involuntarily as I revolved these ideas, I stretched forth the wand, with a concentred energy of desire that its influence should reach Margrave and command him. And since I knew not his whereabout, yet was vaguely aware that, according to any conceivable theory by which the wand could be supposed to carry its imagined virtues to definite goals in distant space, it should be pointed in the direction of the object it was intended to affect, so I slowly moved the wand as if describing a circle, and thus, in some point of the circle—east, west, north, or south—the direction could not fail to be true. Before I had performed half the circle, the wand of itself stopped, resisting palpably the movement of my hand to impel it onward. Had it, then, found the point to which my will was guiding it, obeying my will by some magnetic sympathy never yet comprehended by any recognised science? I know not; but I had not held it thus fixed for many seconds, before a cold air, well remembered, passed by me, stirring the roots of my hair; and, reflected against the opposite wall, stood the hateful Scin-Læca. The Shadow was dimmer in its light than when before beheld, and the outline of the features was less distinct, still it was the unmistakable *lemur*, or image, of Margrave.

And a voice was conveyed to my senses, saying, as from a great distance, and in weary yet angry accents,

"You have summoned me! Wherefore?"

I overcame the startled shudder with which, at first, I beheld the Shadow and heard the Voice.

"I summoned you not," said I; "I sought but to impose upon you my will, that you should persecute, with your ghastly influences, me and mine no more. And now, by whatever authority this wand bestows on me, I so adjure and command you!"

I thought there was a sneer of disdain on the lip through which the answer seemed to come:

"Vain and ignorant; it is but a shadow you command. My body you have cast into a sleep, and it knows not that the shadow is here; nor, when it wakes, will the brain be aware of one reminiscence of the words that you utter or the words that you hear."

"What, then, is this shadow that simulates the body? Is it that which in popular language is called the soul?"

"It is not: soul is no shadow?"

"What then?"

"Ask not me. Use the wand to invoke Intelligences higher than mine."

"And how?"

"I will tell you not. Of yourself you may learn, if you guide the wand by your own pride of will and desire; but in the hands of him who has learned not the art, the wand has its dangers. Again, I say you have summoned me! Wherefore?"

"Lying shade, I summoned thee not."

"So wouldst thou say to the demons, did they come in their terrible wrath, when the bungler, who knows not the springs that he moves, calls them up unawares, and can neither control nor dispel. Less revengeful than they, I leave thee unharmed, and depart!"

"Stay. If, as thou sayest, no command I address to thee—to thee, who art only the image or shadow—can have effect on the body and mind of the being whose likeness thou art, still thou canst tell me what passes now in his brain. Does it now harbour schemes against me through the woman I love? Answer truly."

"I reply for the sleeper, of whom I am more than a likeness, though only the shadow. His thought speaks thus: 'I know, Allen Fenwick, that in thee is the agent I need for achieving the end that I seek. Through the woman thou lovest I hope to subject thee. A grief that will harrow thy heart is at hand: when that grief shall befal, thou wilt welcome my coming. In me alone thy hope will be placed—through me alone wilt thou seek a path out of thy sorrow. I shall ask my conditions: they will make thee my tool and my slave!'"

The Shadow waned—it was gone. I did not seek to detain it, nor, had I sought, could I have known by what process. But a new idea now possessed me. This Shadow, then, that had once so appalled and controlled me, was, by its own confession, nothing more than a Shadow! It had spoken of higher Intelligences; from them I might learn what the Shadow could not reveal. As I still held the wand firmer and firmer in my grasp, my thoughts grew haughtier and bolder. Could the wand, then, bring those loftier beings thus darkly referred to before me? With that thought, intense and engrossing, I guided the wand towards the space, opening boundless and blue from the casement that let in the skies. The wand no longer resisted my hand.

In a few moments I felt the floors of the room vibrate; the air was darkened; a vaporous hazy cloud seemed to rise from the ground without the casement; an awe, infinitely more deep and solemn than that which the Scin-Læca had caused in its earliest apparition, curdled through my veins, and stilled the very beat of my heart.

At that moment, I heard, without, the voice

of Lilian, singing a simple sacred song which I had learned at my mother's knees, and taught to her the day before: singing low, and as with a warning angel's voice. By an irresistible impulse I dashed the wand to the ground, and bowed my head as I had bowed it when my infant mind comprehended, without an effort, mysteries more solemn than those which perplexed me now. Slowly I raised my eyes, and looked round: the vaporous hazy cloud had passed away, or melted into the ambient rose tints amidst which the sun had sunk.

Then, by one of those common reactions from a period of over-strained excitement, there succeeded to that sentiment of arrogance and daring with which these wild, half-conscious invocations had been fostered and sustained, a profound humility, a warning fear.

"What!" said I, inly, "have all those sound resolutions, which my reason founded on the wise talk of Julius Faber, melted away in the wrack of haggard dissolving fancies! Is this my boasted intellect, my vaunted science! I—I, Allen Fenwick, not only the credulous believer, but the blundering practitioner, of an evil magic! Grant what may be possible, however uncomprehended—grant that in this accursed instrument of antique superstition there be some real powers—chemical, magnetic, no matter what—by which the imagination can be aroused, inflamed, deluded, so that it shapes the things I have seen, speaks in the tones I have heard—grant this, shall I keep ever ready, at the caprice of will, a constant tempter to steal away my reason and fool my senses?—or if, on the other hand, I force my sense to admit what all sober men must reject—if I unschool myself to believe that in what I have just experienced, there is no mental illusion, that sorcery is a fact, and a demon world has gates which open to a key that a mortal can forge—who but a saint would not shrink from the practice of powers by which each passing thought of ill might find in a fiend its abettor? In either case—in any case—while I keep this direful relic of obsolete arts, I am haunted—cheated out of my senses—unfitted for the uses of life. If, as my ear or my fancy informs me, grief—human grief—is about to befal me, shall I, in the sting of impatient sorrow, have recourse to an aid which, the same voice declares, will reduce me to a tool and a slave?—tool and slave to a being I dread as a foe! Out on these nightmares! and away with the thing that bewitches the brain to conceive them!"

I rose; I took up the wand, holding it so that its hollow should not rest on the palm of the hand. I stole from the house by the back way, in order to avoid Lilian, whose voice I still heard, singing low, on the lawn in front. I came to a creek, to the bank of which a boat was moored, undid its chain, rowed on to a deep part of the lake, and dropped the wand into its waves. It sank at once: scarcely a ripple furrowed the surface, not a bubble arose from the deep. And, as the boat glided on, the star mirrored itself on the spot where the placid waters had closed over the tempter to evil.

Light at heart I sprang again on the shore, and hastening to Lilian, where she stood on the silvered shining sward, clasped her to my breast.

"Spirit of my life!" I murmured, "no enchantments for me but thine! Thine are the spells by which creation is beautified, and, in that beauty, hallowed. What, though we can see not into the measureless future from the verge of the moment—what though sorrow may smite us while we are dreaming of bliss, let the future not rob me of thee, and a balm will be found for each wound. Love me ever as now, oh my Lilian; troth to troth, side by side, till the grave!"

"And beyond the grave," answered Lilian, softly.

A WORD ABOUT SERVANTS.

Servants of the present day are a very different class from the servants of a century or two ago, when, according to all accounts, the town servants were an exceedingly unpleasant and turbulent class. They went to masquerades dressed in their masters' clothes, and would sometimes even go so far as to borrow the master's sword or wig. They were the retailers of all the scandal of the town, and were very noisy and insolent. They claimed *vails* as a matter of right, and rioted desperately when they were refused or opposed. Vails were presents of money made to them by visitors.

One amusing custom of the servants was to assemble at some public-house, and, calling each other by their masters' titles, to converse about the affairs of the nation and the doings in high life. Addison, in No. 88 of the Spectator, gives the following amusing example:

"My obscurity and taciturnity leave me at liberty, without scandal, to dine if I think fit at a common ordinary, in the meanest as well as the most sumptuous house of entertainment. Falling in the other day at a victualling house near the House of Peers, I heard the maid come down and tell the landlady at the bar that my lord bishop swore he would throw her out of window if she did not bring up more mild beer, and that my lord duke would have a double mug of purle. My surprise was increased in hearing loud and rustick voices speak and answer to each other upon the public affairs by the names of the most illustrious of our nobility, till of a sudden one came running in and cryed the house was rising. Down came all the company together and away! The ale-house was immediately filled with clamour, and scoring one mug to the marquis of such a place, oil and vinegar to such an earl, three quarts to my new lord for wetting his title, and so forth. It is a thing too notorious to mention the crowds of servants and their insolence near the courts of justice and the stairs towards the supreme assembly, where there is an universal mockery of all order, such riotous clamour, and licentious confusion that one would think the whole nation lived in jest, and there was no such thing as rule and

distinction among us. The next place of resort wherein the servile world are let loose is at the entrance of Hyde Park, while the gentry are at the ring. Hither people bring their lacqueys out of state, and here it is that all they say at their tables and act in their houses is communicated to the whole town."

The valet-de-chambre of a great man, was a very important personage. At the levee of his master, no one could see the great man unless the valet was pleased to let him enter the room. Poets and men of letters had to propitiate the valet before their verses would be read by the patron. Hence, in romances and comedies the valet plays an important part.

In contemplating the picture of the servants of our ancestors, we must remember that their masters did not set them a very good example. The conduct of a master necessarily has great influence on his servants. A master can either intimidate a young and inexperienced servant by pride and severity, or he can, by a discreet combination of gentleness and firmness, make him a good servant; the rule is not infallible, but there is encouragement enough to try it. In Addison's time, there seems to have prevailed among masters excessive pride. Referring to it in the Spectator, Addison gives a picture of the miseries experienced by some servants who had the misfortune to be in the service of masters who thought that the only way of obtaining respect was by treating their servants as harshly as they could. He says, in No. 137, of the Spectator: "There are, as these unhappy correspondents inform me, masters who are offended at a cheerful countenance, and think a servant is broke loose from them if he does not preserve the utmost awe in their presence. There is one who says, if he looks satisfied, his master asks him what makes him so pert this morning; if a little sour, 'Hark ye, sirrah, are not you paid your wages?' The poor creatures live in the most extreme misery together. The master knows not how to preserve respect, nor the servant how to give it."

This is a gloomy view of the life of a servant, but the same writer gives the picture of a model master in the person of Sir Roger de Coverly; in whose household he observes one pleasant circumstance, namely: "There is one particular which I have seldom seen but at Sir Roger's. It is usual, in all other places, that servants fly from the parts of the house through which their master is passing; on the contrary, here they industriously place themselves in his way; and it is on both sides, as it were, understood as a visit, when the servants appear without calling."

Attachment has not only existed between master and servants, but also between master and slaves. In the revolution of slaves in Italy, some slaves ventured at the peril of their lives to save their masters from infuriated assailants. Addison gives a touching account of the grief experienced by a servant on the death of his young master. The servant writing to the Spectator, says, "It was the will of Providence that Master Harry was taken very ill of a fever of which he died within ten days of his first falling sick. Here was the first sorrow I ever knew; and I assure you, Mr. Spectator, I remember the beautiful action of the sweet youth in his fever, as fresh as if it were yesterday. If he wanted anything it must be given him by Tom; when I let anything fall, through the grief I was under, he would cry, 'Do not beat the poor boy; give him some more julep for me; nobody else shall give it me.' He would strive to hide his being so bad, when he saw I could not bear his being in so much danger, and comforted me, saying, 'Tom, Tom, have a good heart.' When I was holding a cup at his mouth, he fell into convulsions; and at this very time I hear my dear master's last groan."

A true attachment does not for the least diminish the respect of the servant towards the master. A master often forfeits true and real respect by false pride, and by treating his dependents as so many blocks of wood or stone, instead of human beings endowed with susceptibilities and feelings.

Much abuse has been bestowed on the servants of the present day: sometimes too deservedly, but often undeservedly. Modern servants are a better educated class than those of our ancestors, and they are, speaking of them as a body, hardworking and honest. There are often faults on the side of the employers; faults of want of consideration, and want of respect for the feelings of people in an inferior position. Ingratitude will be found among servants as among all sorts and conditions of humanity, but assuredly few servants do their duty the worse for knowing that while the doing of it is scrupulously exacted, they are thought of, cared for, encouraged, pleasantly spoken to and pleasantly looked at.

TUNNEL SPIDERS.

"TAKE care of my spiders." It was Antonio Magliobecchi who laid this imperative injunction upon the Grand-Duke of Tuscany. I like the expression, for it has the smack of the true lover of spiders about it, placing sovereigns in their proper position in the scale of being in comparison with spiders. Antonio Magliobecchi the librarian of the Pitti Palace at Florence, loved books and spiders—ancient books and tame spiders—and owned no other loves. He lived in a crib up in a corner of the library, with the books he read and the spiders he fed. Every hour he called his spiders out of their nests to receive their food, and, it is said, they knew his voice and obeyed his call. Plants, birds, fish, in cases, cages, and vases, or conservatories, aviaries and aquaria, have been company to lone folks, and spiders seem to suit the loneliest of all, the solitary prisoner, and the unsocial recluse. Spider-taming may suit some tempers better than growing flowers, training song birds, or watching prawns, and I say every one to his taste, or every man in his humour; but this much is certain that spider cages or cases would

not fail to furnish the student of zoology with many strange illustrations of animal instinct and ingenuity. Antonio Magliobecchi read alternately books and beasts, and musing upon the thoughts of man, and the ways of animals, reached a green old age. His vast learning and wonderful memory made his conversation very interesting, and great personages did not ask him to a corner of their tables, but waited upon him in his cell—none the less that the first response to their approaching footsteps when heard upon his staircase, was sure to be the command —"take care of my spiders."

The spiders kept by the celebrated and celebade Bibliophile and Arachæorphile of Florence seem to have been the common house-spiders. Most students of common spiders keep them alive in various ways; but it is less easy to keep the most interesting and wonderful kinds; the flying, leaping, skating, diving, and tunneling spiders. Of these the diving spiders, which live in bubbles under water, have I believe been kept for months, and the tunneling spiders for years. Some friends of mine kept mygales, for years hoping to see them make their tunnels. They fed them carefully, kept them warm and supplied them with every material necessary for making their tubular dwelling; but it was all in vain; for, however well supplied with clay and straw, earth and moss, the exiles would neither build nests nor spin sheaths in captivity.

The word Mygale is the Greek for a field-mouse, and some learned man thought it would do very well as the name of a subterranean spider. The mygales are the largest spiders known. I have seen some from the West Indies which were as big as a spider crab. They have been accused of catching small birds in their webs, and, if their threads are strong enough, to snare and hold the lovely little birds of hot climes—most certainly they themselves, with their strong claws and fangs, are able to complete the assassinations which their webs begin. These spiders have their mandibles, pincers, fangs, or falces (the instruments are called by all these names), articulated or jointed horizontally. Most of them have hairy papillæ upon their feet, which enable them to walk upon smooth and perpendicular surfaces. Accustomed to think of this group of spiders as the inhabitants of tropical climates, it will be a surprise to many intelligent persons to learn that there is a species of them which is British. They resemble each other in as far as they live in tubes or tunnels of the earth. In October, 1855, Mr. Joshua Brown, of Cirencester, when on a visit to Hastings, found the tunnel spider. Passing down a lane with a high and steep sand-bank on each side partially covered with grass and bushes, he noticed on one of the banks which had a southern aspect something like the cocoon of a moth hanging down. On compressing it slightly, it seemed to be quite empty. It then occurred to him that it might be the nest of a spider. Examining it more closely, he was surprised to find that it descended into the bank, and appeared to be firmly attached at the distal extremity. He could not extract the first without breaking it. His curiosity being now thoroughly awakened, he went more cautiously to work with the second specimen which he found, removing the sand carefully with a long knife. At a depth of nine inches he found the end of the nest, and drew it out quite perfect. It was a long silken sac. A hardish lump at the bottom of the sac proved to be the spider. The next specimen he found went much deeper, and indeed so deep that he failed, after much trouble, in getting it out at all. He tried many others, sometimes succeeding, and sometimes failing, in getting them out entire. They vary greatly in length, being apparently longer or shorter at the different stages of the growth of the spider, and some of them presenting obvious appearances of lengthening. The usual length is about nine inches, but some of them were much longer. Their form is tubular, and their diameter three-quarters of an inch, with a purse-like rounding at one end. The sheath consists of closely woven silk of a very fine quality, neat, clean, and white, or whitish, within, and covered with yellowish or brownish particles of sand without, which seemingly soil the tube. The portion of the tube visible on the bank is about a couple of inches long, and is pendant and inflated. Darker than the subterranean portion of the tube, it corresponds in colour with the general surface of the bank. One of the tubes being in a collapsed state, the sides pressing together, with the spider at one end, Mr. Brown was surprised on opening the box to perceive a movement as if it were undergoing inflation, and next morning he found it inflated throughout its whole length, and especially the end which had been exposed on the bank. How the spider effects this inflation is a puzzle to the curious in the secrets of spider life. Are there doors or valves in the exposed, distended, and external end?

Another puzzle is the question on what the British tunnel spider feeds herself. No flies or fragments of insects have been found in the nests. How is she fed when breeding in her nursery? Her web is not glutinous, and it is covered with sand; and moreover there is no door to her tubular dwelling for going out and coming in. The spiders kept by Mr. Joshua Brown moved backwards and forwards in their tubes, but never came out at either end. He concluded that the female Atypus of Sulger neither feeds on insects nor has any means of obtaining them. A half-devoured earthworm having been found partly in and partly out of one of the tubes, it was hastily inferred that a worm-devouring spider had been found. The way to find out is to ask the spiders themselves by observing them closely. May not this spider close her tube during the day to keep out her enemies, and open it at night when going forth in search of prey?

No mules have ever been found in any of these cosy silken tubes. Do they dine at their clubs, and sleep out? The lady spiders being bigger and stronger than the gentlemen, and

having a penchant for devouring the lovers they do not espouse, wooing is invested with dangers and difficulties. This much is certain, that without a decree of judicial separation the sexes live apart. The number of eggs found in the cocoon, is said to be from thirty to forty.

The female Atypus is about two-fifths of an inch long. The legs and feelers are provided with hair and spines, and the colour of these parts is reddish-brown, the abdomen being egg-shaped, sparingly clothed with hairs, glossy, and of a dark brown colour, faintly tinged with red. The male is smaller and darker than the female. His palpi, or feelers, are globose at the base, and are of fine red colour.

Although the British tunnel-spider is as yet but little known, there are, it is clear, considerable differences between the British and the foreign species. The species found near London, Exeter, Carlisle, and Hastings seems to insert a scabbard into an excavation, but the species found in the vicinity of the Mediterranean is called a mason-spider, because she makes a tube of clay. This tube undoubtedly resembles more the work of the potter than of the mason. There is a wasp which is properly enough called the mason-wasp, because it cements sands together, and builds up the fabric of a nest in this way. But the tunnel of this subterranean spider has more resemblance to pottery than to masonry; and if this circumstance is to decide the name, the animal ought to be called, not the mason, but the potter-spider. This clay tube, which is quite distinct from the silken lining, or sheath, is a finer specimen of pottery than the prettiest tiny flower-pot ever seen. The silken lining is more delicate than the finger of the finest silk glove; and the lid is a marvellous thing. It is about the size of a coat-button. The outside of this round button-like lid is made of clay, baked hard and made smooth, and the tapering inside consists of layers, or coatings, of silk, adhering firmly to the clay. It is attached to the tube by a hinge, elastic enough to spring open of itself. The innermost lining of the lid is perforated by a circle of little holes, which, communicating with the edge of the lid, forms a first-rate ventilating apparatus. When the birds which are the enemies of the potter-spider try with their beaks and claws to prize open this lid to pull the inhabitant of the tube out of her home and eat her, she fastens her claws, which are provided with fine hooks on purpose, into the silken sides of the scabbard, pressing against the walls of the tube all the while, with all her might, and holding fast the lining of the lid with her pincers for dear life. But her strength would be of no avail if the air-holes did not enable her to endure a long siege, by allowing the escape of the carbonic gas, or the foul air rejected in respiration. The lid, however, is at once hinged, waterproof, and ventilating; and the genius of man has not yet put upon his head, it may be frankly affirmed, a hat ventilated so ingeniously as the door of the tunnel of this spider. I have had living specimens of this spider in my hand, and they did not attempt to apply their fangs to my flesh, but crawled about gently enough, the hooks of their claws being peculiarly irritating to the skin of my fingers. The larger species of the tropics, and especially the black kind of South America, being large and fierce, large as crabs and fierce as scorpions, are renowned as venomous.

But not merely are there aerial, aquatic, and subterranean spiders, there are spiders living socially and spinning webs in communities of silk weavers, working in factories, in fact, deep down in coal mines. These spider factories were discovered in the Pelton colliery, near Chester-le-Street, in the county of Durham. The gallery in which they live is three hundred and twenty feet deep. Their webs were at first supposed to be the production of fungi. Seventy horses and ponies working in the mine, it is supposed that the spiders were in the first instance carried down with the fodder for the horses. The moths carried down amongst the grass and hay in the eggs and pupa state would supply them with food, and their webs are constructed to catch the moths. When the Grand-Duke, afterwards the Emperor Nicholas, was at Wallsend, he equipped himself in a proper miner's suit, being resolved to descend a coal mine, and see the wonders of the bowels of the earth. Nevertheless, on arriving at the mouth of the pit, and staring down into the darkness below, his courage failed him, and turning away, he exclaimed, "Mon Dieu, c'est la bouche d'enfer!" The present Isabella, Queen of Spain, and the Prince of Wales, are the only royal personages, I believe, who ever ventured down into the depths and the darkness of a coal mine. Yet moths and spiders live in them. The galleries in which they were found were galleries seldom used, and through which very little air passes. Mr. Morrison, who made known the existence of these spiders, says in one of his letters:

"On passing through the portion of our underground workings, last night, in which these webs abound, I observed that the gaps I had made in the webs in my last visit to that quarter, were being spun over again; and on one of them I counted twenty-three or twenty-four little spiders busily engaged in mending the rent."

Mr. Meade of Bradford to whom the spider was sent for identification pronounced it to be Nereine errans, a species which had hitherto been only occasionally found in the fields of Lancashire, and North Wales. Mr. Stainton, from the scales of the small moths, found in the webs believed them to be Tivida or clothes moths. Nereine errans is a yellowish-brown spider about an eighth of an inch long. The web the spiders spin is a genuine and strongish cobweb, much blackened with coal-dust. It is no wonder, if when this revelation of spider life in the coal galleries, was first made known, the statements were received with some scepticism; but they have been far surpassed by the news from Australia of caterpillars, with sixteen feet, found in a room containing a quantity of shelled maize. This verandah room with plastered walls,

on being opened after having been closed for some time, was found covered with a beautiful web of white silk, seventy-two feet square in certain directions, and in all two hundred and fifty-two feet square. Specimens of it were given away the size of large silk pocket-handkerchiefs. This insect has been called the silk Vulcan Hyphantidium sericarium, and most certainly surpasses our Nereine errans, or wandering sea-nymph in silk weaving, whilst resembling her by working in co-operative factories. The silk Vulcan, is, I may remark by the way, an odd-enough name to give to a larve; as a coal-pit is a queer haunt for a sea-nymph; and not less strange is it that this pedantic taste for mythological names should have caused a tunnel-making, and scabbard-spinning spider, of which no evil is known to be named Atypus, after Ate, the goddess of mischief.

Sociability in spiders is, however, a fact truly notable. Sociability is deemed a sign of a certain elevation in the scale of being. Generally among spiders, even the male and the female associate but seldom, and at long intervals. The male of the British tunnel spider, we have seen, lives apart from his spouse in a rabbit-warren, and no doubt it is because he is afraid she should feel hungry, "loving him so much," as the nursery-maids say to the infants, "that she could eat him." The big spiders which weave the large webs found in our cellars and outhouses (Tegenaria and Cinoflo civilis) live alone.

Nereine errans being found in coal pits, reminds me that Epeira hiemilis frequently infests the lamps of lamp-posts. The Arachnida are entomologists; and like other moth-hunters, know that their prey is attracted by light. Have spiders, I may ask, remembering the good and great Robert Peel's definition of a statesman, a statesmanlike faculty "of adapting themselves to circumstances as they arise?"

FAIR URIENCE.

1.

A KNIGHT that wears no lady's sleeve
Upon his helm, from dawn to eve,
And all night long beneath the throng
Of stern-eyed stars, without reprieve
My moan I make, as on I ride
Along waste lands and waters wide,
The haunts of bitterns; smoky strips
Of sea-coast where there come no ships;
Or over brambly hump-back'd downs,
And under walls of hilly towns,
And out again across the plain,
Oft borne beneath a hissing rain
Within the murmurs of the wind,
That doth at nightfal leave his lair
To follow and vex me; till I find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair.

2.

Pale argent on a field pure or,
A fountain springeth evermore
To reach one star that, just too far
For its endeavour, trembled o'er
The topmost spray its strength will yield,
For my device upon my shield
Long since I wrought; and under it
A long scroll of flame is writ
The legend, see! . . . "I SHALL ATTAIN."
In letters large: albeit "In vain!"
My heart replies to mock my eyes;
For where that fountain seems to rise
Its highest, it is back consign'd
To earth, and falls in void despair,
Like my sad seven-years' hope to find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair.

3.

Seven years ago (how long it seems
Since then!) as free as summer streams
My fancy play'd with sun and shade,
And all my days were dim with dreams.
One day—I wot not whence nor how
It flash'd upon me—even now
I marvel at the change it wrought!
My whole life leapt into one thought,
Which thought was made my lifelong act;
As, dash'd in dazzling cataract,
From its long steeps, at last outleaps
Some lazy ooze, which henceforth keeps
One steadfast way; so all my mind
Was in that moment made aware
That henceforth I must die, or find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair.

4.

Since then, how many lands and climes
Have I ransacked—how many times
Been bruised with blows—how many foes
Have dealt to death—how many crimes
Avenged—how many maidens freed!
And yet I seem to be, indeed,
No nearer to the endless guest.
Neither by night nor day I rest:
My heart burns in me like a fire:
My soul is parch'd with long desire:
Ghostlike I grow: and, when I go,
I hear men mock and mutter low
And feel men's fingers point behind—
"The moon-struck knight that talks to air!
Lord help the fool who hopes to find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair!"

5.

At times, in truth, I start, and shake
Myself from thought, as one man wake
From some long trance to hard mischance,
Who avows not yet what choice to make
'Twixt false and true, since all things seem
Mere fragments of his broken dream,
When I recal what men aver
That all my lifelong guest of her
Is vain and void; since thrice (say they)
Three hundred years are rolled away,
And knights forgot, whose bones now rot,
And their good deeds remember'd not,
Fail'd one by one, long ere I pined
For this strange guest; whence they declare
No living knight may hope to find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair.

6.

Ah me! . . . For Launcelot maketh cheer
With great-eyed, glorious Guinevere;
In glad green wood, with Queen Isoud
Tristram of Lyones hunts the deer;
In cool of bloomy trellises
Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris,

After long labours brought to end,
With their two dames in joyance spend
The blue June hours; Sir Agravaine
With Dame Laurell along the main
Seeks his new home; and Pelleas
Sits smiling calm in halls of glass
At Nimuë's knees. Good knights be these
Because they have their hearts at ease,
Because their lives and loves are join'd:
O if two hearts in one life were,
What life were that! . . . God let me find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair!

7.

Mere life is vile. I may have done
Deeds not unworthy, and have won
Unwilling fame, tho' all men blame
This heart's unrest which makes me shun
The calm content which good men take
From good deeds done for good deeds' sake,
Deeds that in doing of the deed
Do bless the doer, who should need
No bless beyond: but what to me
Is this, and that over land and sea
My name should fly? Or what care I
For the mere sake of climbing high,
To climb for ever steps that wind
Up empty towers? I only wear
Life hollow thus, unless I find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair.

8.

Sometimes, whom I to free from wrong
Have dragons fought, strange folk do throng
About my steed, and lightly lead
My horse and me, with shout and song,
In banner'd castle-courts; and there
From chambers cool come dames most fair,
Whose forms as thro' a cloud I see,
Whose voices seem far off to be,
Tho' near they stand, and bid me rest
Awhile within, where, richly drest,
In order stored, with goblets poured,
I see the sparkling banquet-board;
But far from these is all my mind,
For . . . "What if faces I must scare
In noisome dew now seek to bind
Fair Urience with the yellow hair?"

9.

In deepest dark, when no moon shines
Thro' the blind night on the black pines
With bony boughs, if I, to drouze
(As sometimes mere despair inclines
A frame outworn) should slip from horse
And lay me down along the gorse
In some cold hollow far away
A little while—albeit I pray
Ere I lie down—my dreams are drear:
First comes a slowly-creeping fear,
Like icy dew, that seems to glue
My limbs to earth, and freeze them thro',
Then a long shriek on a wild wind,
And "O," I think, "if hers it were,
And I a murder'd corpse should find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair!"

10.

Sometimes 'neath dropping white rose-leaves
I ride, and under gilded eaves,
Of garden bowers, where, plucking flowers,
With scarlet skirts and stiff gold sleeves,
Between green walls, and two by two,
Kings' daughters walk, whilst just a few
Faint harps make music mild, that falls
Like mist from off the ivied walls
Along the sultry coon, and stirs
The hearts of far-off harvesters;
Then, on the brink of hope, I shrink
With shuddering strange, the while I think
"O what if, after body and mind
Consumed in toil, and all my care,
Not a corpse, but a bride, I find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair?"

11.

But when at night's most lonely noon,
The ghost of an ill-buried moon
Frets in the shroud of a cold cloud,
And, like the echo of a tune,
Within my ear the silence makes
A yearning sound that throbs and aches,
A whisper-sigh . . . "The grave is deep,
There is no better thing than sleep.
Life's fever speeds its own disease,
Let the male work: be thou at peace."
Yet why should this fair earth which is
So fair, so fit to furnish bliss,
Prove a mere failure—stuff design'd
By Hope to clothe her foe Despair?
And whence, if vain, this need to find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair?

12.

This grieving after unknown good,
Though but a sickness in the blood,
Cries from the dust. And God is just.
No rock denies the raven food.
And who would torture, night by night,
Some starving creature with the sight
Of bouquets fair with plenty spread,
Then mock . . . "crawl empty thou to bed
And dream of viands not for thee!"
Yet night by night, dear God, to me
In wake or sleep such visions creep
To gnaw my heart with hunger deep.
How can I meet dull death, resign'd
So die the fool of dreams so fair?
Nay, love hath seen, and life shall find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair.

13.

Good Pilgrim to whatever shrine,
With whatsoever vows of thine,
Thou wendest, stay! I charge thee pray
That God may bless this guest of mine.
Sweet maidens, whom from losel hands
My own have faced in many lands,
I bid you each, when ye shall be
With your good knights, remember me!
And wish me well, that some day I
May find fair Urience; else I die
In love's defeat. To die were sweet,
If, dying, I might clasp her feet.
Death comes at last to all mankind,
Yet ere I die, I know not where,
I know not how, but I must find
Fair Urience with the yellow hair.

MICHAEL THE DRAGOON.

In the year '49 I was major in the dragoon regiment of which I have now the honour to be colonel; but, owing to the great loss of officers in the early part of the Hungarian campaign, was virtually then in command. The rebels knew our weak point. They were aware that men could be supplied to the Austrian army in any number, but that to cripple us effectually they

had only to pick off the officers, and we were at their mercy. This plan they accordingly carried out. None of us ever expected to see nightfall when we went into action. Thus it happened that, though but a young man at the time, I was senior officer of the Lichtenstein regiment, as fine a body of men, I venture to say, as are to be found in the service.

We had suffered a good deal since the beginning of the war, and our force was reduced from its original strength of one thousand to about seven hundred and fifty sabres, but the men were true as steel, and eager to revenge the death of their comrades. The time of which I am going to speak was the latter end of March, immediately after the battle of Szolnok, a town upon the right bank of the Theiss, before which we had just sustained a tremendous defeat. Prince Windischgrätz, the Austrian commander, was falling back as rapidly as possible upon the river, and the Hungarians, under Görgei, were in hot pursuit. Though much cut up, our fellows did not lose heart, and the retreat was conducted with tolerable order.

My Lichtensteins led the advance. With us marched a corps of engineers, and the waggons carrying pontoons, upon which it was intended to cross the river. Behind us we could hear the distant thunder of the guns, which told of the stubborn resistance still offered by our comrades to the Hungarian pursuit. We had arrived upon the bank, and were making every preparation to construct the bridge, when an orderly with despatches dashed up to the front, and inquired for me. He was the bearer of an order to lead the cavalry immediately across the river, as the Prince had received information that Szentes, a petty market town, of purely local importance, separated by a small wood from the left bank of the Theiss, was held by a considerable force of the enemy, who might embarrass the passage of the army next morning, or at any rate keep us in check until Görgei came up, when, taken between two fires, our utter annihilation seemed certain. If, on the contrary, we could manage to put the river between us and our pursuers, we should be secure, for their hastily raised levies were unprovided with the means of crossing its rapid stream. I was, therefore, to reconnoitre Szentes, and carry it at all hazards, before the arrival of the Prince.

To read was to obey. Leaving the engineers to construct the bridge, I summoned my men, and as there was no time to look for a ford, they were compelled to swim the river. Some loss was experienced in the transit, a few were carried away by the violence of the current, but nearly all finally reached the left bank in safety. It was now dusk. Parties were sent out instantly to reconnoitre the town, pickets were thrown into the wood, and we got ready for immediate action if the report of the scouts should render it advisable.

Now, I should state that, though the majority of the Lichtensteiners were men upon whom I could implicitly depend, there were some few Hungarians in the regiment in whose fidelity to their oath I did not place perfect trust. I had had no particular reason for this doubt; all the men had fought well and bravely in the actions which had occurred, and no signs of disaffection to the emperor had been noted. Still, I thought it best to be upon my guard, and had, therefore, some days back, privately desired the captains to see that none of those whom I distrusted were appointed to any important charge. They were especially forbidden to place them on pickets. The arrangement had worked well; none of the Hungarians were told off for outpost duty; or, if they were, always in company with others whose fidelity was unimpeachable; and the men were believed not to have perceived the precaution. In accordance with this rule, I was justified in supposing that the pickets now in the wood between us and Szentes were all well-affected men.

Towards nine o'clock our scouts returned. They brought with them a couple of peasants whom they had found gathering twigs and fallen branches in the wood. Two active Bohemians, well acquainted with the language, had changed clothes with the prisoners, and by this means penetrated without trouble into the town. They reported it occupied by about one thousand men, mostly peasants, armed with scythes and flails. The news of our defeat at Szalnok had apparently not yet reached them; but although no suspicion of our vicinity appeared to be entertained, too many were about to render an immediate attack prudent. I called the officers together, and we agreed to assault at midnight. The men were dismissed for a couple of hours to get their suppers, and obtain a little rest after their laborious day's march. A very short time elapsed before the troops had their fires lighted and the camp-kettles swinging over the cheerful blaze. Some superintended the cooking, while others picketed the horses, and refreshed the poor brutes with water and such scanty forage as was at hand.

I have seldom seen a more picturesque scene than our little bivouac presented to me as I lay wrapped in my cloak by the fire, enjoying my after-supper pipe. The night, though cold, was fine but dark. As there was no moon, all the light afforded by the sky was given by the stars, which seemed to shine out with unusual brilliancy. Before me rolled the rapid waters of the Theiss, across which came the clink of the pontoneers' hammers, as the bridge grew beneath their practised hands. Around us the men were mostly sleeping, for the poor fellows were tired with the forty-mile march from Szolnok. The flickering blaze of the fires was thrown up against the dark background of wood and thicket, and brought out here and there in strong relief the figure of some energetic spirit, who, too excited to rest, was pacing to and fro, and meditating, perhaps, whether the next hour or two might not see the close of his earthly career. I felt convinced that the peasants with whom we should have to deal in attacking Szentes would fight desperately enough, and that no easy task lay before us; but I had great

confidence in the terrors of a night surprise, and little fear as to the result.

It might have been about half-past ten, and, with the exception of the sounds of which I have spoken, quiet reigned around the fires. My pipe had dropped from my lips, and I was lapsing into slumber, when a loud shout from the wood—the well-known "Eljen!" of the Hungarians—started every one of us to his feet in an instant. A rush was made to the horses, but long before one-half of the force were in their saddles, the Philistines were upon us.

From three parts of the wood at once a column of dark forms, dimly seen by the light of the expiring watch-fires, broke with shouts and cries upon the Lichtensteiners nearest to them, and the work of death began. Though taken thoroughly by surprise, and mostly roused from sleep, the conduct of officers and men, I may be excused for saying, could not have been surpassed. Those who had not yet mounted fell rapidly into formation, and opposed a front to the assailants, which the desperate rush of the latter found it impossible to break; while gathering quickly together the portion of the force which had gained the saddle, we swept down upon the enemy, charging through their uneven line again and again as if it had been so much pasteboard. A quarter of an hour decided the struggle. The daring valour of the ill-armed peasants was no match for the disciplined intelligence of the perfectly-accoutred Lichtensteiners, and the assailants withdrew into the wood, leaving fully half their number upon the field, with the pursuing cavalry adding every moment to the roll of the slain.

As it would have been rash to follow up the pursuit without some further knowledge of the enemy we were encountering, I gave orders to sound the recal. The required information was soon gained from a wounded Hungarian, of whom we learnt that our assailants were the Szentes men, who, having become aware of our vicinity—though from what source our informant could not, or would not, say—had entertained the same opinion as I had done of the efficacy of a night surprise, and had hoped to drive us into the Theiss.

As there was now no reason for delaying the assault of the town, and we might hope for easy victory after the advantage we had gained, I ordered instant advance. During the march I ascertained that our loss had been severe. Upwards of eighty of the Lichtensteiners were hors de combat, and, although the Hungarian dead could be counted by hundreds, the latter fact in no degree lessened our exasperation. What seemed most unaccountable was the completeness of the surprise. The Hungarian "Eljen!" had been the first notification of an enemy's approach. Neither of the outposts stationed in the wood—one indeed almost within gun-shot of the town—had given the least sign of alarm. Unless treachery had been at work, how was this to be explained? The reason for the silence of the two sentinels nearest to the Theiss was cleared up as we reached the spots where the poor fellows had been posted. Both had fallen, having probably been taken unawares by peasants gliding through the brushwood. This I afterwards ascertained to have been the case. Here, at any rate, were two of the men, both slain at their posts; but where was the third? His horse was found tied to a tree; his pistols, undischarged, were in the holsters; but the sentinel himself was not to be found. One inference only could be drawn. He must have deserted, and it was to the information given by him that we were indebted for the Hungarian attack.

Further inquiry, as rapidly pursued as the circumstances would admit, brought out the suspicious fact that the missing sentinel was one of the men upon whom I had given orders to keep a watchful eye. He was a Hungarian, named Michael Szelády, a smart soldier, and, saving his nationality, a man with whom no possible fault could be found. He had been three years in the regiment, and was never suspected of political leanings towards his countrymen. Except upon this ground, however, no reason could be assigned for his desertion. Time would not allow of investigating the cause for infringing my orders, that no important charge was to be intrusted to this man, for by the time I fully ascertained these facts, we were already emerging from the wood and sighted the town.

Half the men were ordered to dismount and advance at once to the attack, while a squadron was sent round to assault the other side of the town. The loss which the insurgents had sustained upon the bank of the Theiss had, however, been so severe that little resistance was offered. A feeble barricade of carts, and similar materials had been thrown up in the main street, but it was easily surmounted by the active assailants, who swarmed over it like cats, and sabred the defenders where they stood. The few who did oppose our entrance fought well enough, but their number was small, and when our comrades charged upon their rear a hasty flight dispersed even this scanty band. The Lichtensteiners were so irritated at the disturbance of their bivouac that they gave little quarter. The officers had difficulty in dissuading them from firing the town: but not even the most positive orders could prevent their pillaging the houses, and destroying every valuable too unwieldly to be carried away. I must confess that I took little pains to enforce strict discipline, for the loss of so large a number of my men had aroused in me also some spirit of revenge.

An hour perhaps had passed in plundering the town when I gave orders to sound the assembly in the market-place. The men came straggling in, a few bringing prisoners, from whom it was thought important information might be gained, but all with as much booty as they could manage to collect. While the roll was being called, lights were placed in the windows of the houses looking upon the square, and lanterns attached to poles were hung up at

the corners to enable us to guard against another surprise. While this was being done, my attention was directed to a house presenting a different appearance from any of the rest; large and high, built of stone, with the doors fast closed and windows dark, it seemed at first as if deserted. No answer being given to our summons, an attempt was made to force the door, but its massive character defied violence, and I was on the point of calling off the men from wasting valuable time upon what, after all, was probably unimportant, when one of the serjeants came to tell me that the house belonged to Gregor Szelády, the syndic of the town, who was believed to be on his death-bed. The name being that of the missing sentry, made me send for the prisoner who had given the information, and learning further that the syndic had a son, Michael, in the Austrian cavalry—although the man did not know in what regiment—I naturally presumed that the deserter had taken refuge with his family.

A bag of gunpowder was fastened to the door, and being exploded by a short train, speedily blew it inward. Headed by an officer, a strong party rushed into the house, and began their search. They had not long to seek. In a back room on the ground-floor, the whole family was assembled—the syndic lying dead upon a bed in the corner, having apparently just expired; some females and Michael Szelády, grouped in speechless sorrow around the corpse. The entrance of our party aroused them from their stupor; the women threw themselves before the deserter, and called loudly to him to make his escape. Michael rushed to the window, and before our men could push the women aside, had thrown it open and jumped out. He was instantly followed, and after a long chase among the out-buildings in the rear of the premises, was captured and brought back into the room.

"Bring him out to the major, men," said the officer. "His case will soon be settled. Ten paces and a firing party for the deserter."

"Oh! spare him, my lord!" exclaimed one of the females, an elderly woman, throwing herself with clasped hands at the officer's feet. "Spare the poor boy! He never meant to desert. It was to ask his dying father's last blessing that he left his post, and we persuaded him. Oh, spare the boy!"

The two other women—a couple of handsome dark-eyed girls—one of whom was Michael's sister, the other his cousin and betrothed, followed the mother's example, and joined loudly in her supplications. Michael himself never uttered a word.

"A likely story," returned the officer, "but no matter. The facts are clear enough. Even if what you say were true, I have no power to save the man. Out of the way, there! Now, men—forward—march!"

As he spoke he pushed Michael's cousin, who was nearest to him, aside, more roughly perhaps than he needed to have done. She was thrown off her balance, and falling forward cut her mouth against his heavy riding-boot. The blood gushed over her face and stained her light-coloured dress. The sight roused Michael to fury. With a vehement curse he swung himself loose from the men who held him, rushed upon the officer, tore the sabre from his hand, and cut him down before the others of the party had time to interfere. He was disarmed and pinioned in a moment, however, and brought out just as the noise of the scuffle and the shrieks of the women had induced me to order in more men.

When Szelády appeared outside, followed by two men supporting the wounded officer, it was with difficulty I could keep the Lichtensteiners from rushing upon their former comrade, and killing him. I should have been justified under the circumstances, in ordering out a party and shooting him without delay, but preferring to give the man a hearing, I assembled the officers for a drumhead court-martial, and proceeded to try Michael Szelády for the grave military crimes of desertion and wounding his superior.

The facts were clear and unmistakable. I was particularly anxious to learn how it had happened that Szelády had been placed on outpost duty, contrary to especial orders; the inquiry showed how curiously accident sometimes frustrates our most carefully-laid plans. Although the sergeants were prohibited from placing certain men on sentry, it was yet politic to prevent the men themselves from perceiving they were objects of supicion, and they were therefore placed in regular order upon the rota with the rest, but it was so contrived that something always occurred to prevent their taking their turn of duty. In the present instance, Szelády stood third on the list, but when the sentries were posted in the wood, it was found that No. 1 was missing, having been drowned in passing the Theiss; No. 2 was disabled by a kick from the charger of one of his comrades while riding in the dark among the trees; and the sergeant called forward No. 3, because he had literally no better man available. It was indispensable that a smart soldier should occupy the post; it was only to be held for a short time; and the good character of Szelády in the regiment, with his apparent want of sympathy with the rebels, added to the reasons prevalent with the sergeant for infringing the order. It should be added that no one had the slightest suspicion of Michael's having relatives in Szentes.

The case against the prisoner was apparently unanswerable. He had left his post in presence of the enemy, occasioning by negligence, if not by treachery, heavy loss to the regiment; he had tried to escape when discovered, and had severely wounded his officer when captured. The unanimous sentence of the court was, Guilty upon all the charges; the judgment—Death.

Before passing sentence, I, as president of the court, addressed the prisoner, and told him we were willing to hear any explanation he might have to offer. Szelády had listened to the proceedings thus far in apparent stupor. It evi-

dently seemed to him so inexplicable that he should be arraigned upon so frightful a charge as having treacherously caused the death of his comrades, that he had scarcely been able hitherto to realize the horror of his position. He roused up a little, however, at my address, and after a short pause began to speak. I remember his words well, for his speech struck me as one of remarkable ability for a man in his station.

"Major and gentlemen," said he, saluting the court, "I know that whatever I may say won't be of any use, for it seems as if everything was against me. I must die by my comrades' fire as a coward and a traitor, where I'd willingly have given every drop of blood in my body to have saved even one of them. I'm not afraid of death, I've looked him too often in the face for that; but I do shudder at the thought that those by whose side I've lived and fought for years will curse my memory after I'm gone. That's a dreadful thing to die with upon one's mind, and more than all, because as I hope for everlasting salvation, I'm as innocent of the charges brought against me as any one of your honours can be. Except that I cut down the lieutenant—I did that, it's true; but I put it to you, gentlemen, whether if any of you were to see the girl you loved struck aside and injured, you wouldn't have acted as I did? But that's not the point so much as the charge that by leaving my post I betrayed my comrades. That's what weighs upon my mind, and it's that in particular I want to explain.

"When the sergeant left me on sentry I dismounted, feeling cold, tied my horse to a tree, and marched up and down for, I dare say, a matter of an hour, looking every now and then at the town here, where the lights in the windows were gradually disappearing, and everything getting quiet. I was thinking we should have an easier job in surprising the place than we had fancied, and you may be sure it was the very last of my thoughts that any one I cared a pipe of tobacco about was among the inhabitants. I hadn't heard from home for months—in fact, since the beginning of the war—and not the least idea my poor father had removed here entered my mind.

"As I said, major, I marched up and down about an hour, when I thought I heard a rustle in the bushes near. 'Halt!' thinks I, 'let's keep quiet a bit, and see who goes there.' So I stepped behind the tree to which my horse was tied, and watched. In a minute or two, out came a woman, whose face I couldn't see for her hood, and she was making off towards the town, when I sang out to her to stop, or I should fire. She started, as you may suppose, to see a soldier so near, when she didn't know there was one within miles of the place, and waited till I came up to her. I was just asking what brought her into the wood at that time of night, and telling her she was my prisoner, when she gave a scream, called out my name, and jumped upon my neck. Then, major, I discovered she was my cousin, Carlin Karobyi, to whom I was promised before I had to serve. From her I heard that my father and all the family had come to Szentes a year ago; that he had been chosen syndic, and was now very ill; that she had been sent by my mother to a place some miles away to fetch a celebrated herb-doctor who had made some wonderful cures, as a last hope; but that she found he had been killed and his house plundered by Jellachich's Croats the day before, and was now getting back to Szentes as fast as she could.

"You may think, gentlemen, what terrible news this was to me. First, my father very ill, and not likely to survive the night; next, my mother, and sister, and poor Carlin in a place we were going to attack, and I knowing only too well what they might expect from the Lichtensteiners when their blood was up. Carlin begged and prayed me to come with her into the town to see my father once more before he died; and when I told her it was impossible I could leave my post, she assured me that I should soon be back again and nothing need be found out. Then I began to think, too, the thing might be managed, if she could only get me into the town without being seen; for that, if I could not get back in time, it would be thought, when the advance took place, that I had fallen in with the rest, and I should then be able to protect the women after the town was taken. In talking with Carlin, we had got near Szentes, and I clean forgot all about my horse being tied to the tree, and that being found there I should be thought to have deserted.

"Well, gentlemen, to make my story short, I agreed to go with Carlin, as she promised I should be back in half an hour. The lights were all out as we got into the place; there wasn't a soul stirring, and we reached my father's house unseen. When we entered, Carlin told my mother and sister that I had come with her, and after a bit I went in to my father. How they found out in the town that the Lichtensteiners were in the wood and on the bank of the river, I don't know. Perhaps my mother can tell you. All I do know is that my father kept fast hold of my hand till he died, and wouldn't let me go. And the first I knew of the attack was from the firing outside, and afterwards the trumpet sounding the assembly. Then came the lieutenant and our men, and you know what has just happened."

Rather to test the truth of Szelády's story for my own satisfaction than for any benefit its confirmation would be to him, I summoned the mother, and tried to discover from her how our occupation of the wood had become known in Szentes. From her statement, it appeared that a neighbour, who was in the house when Carlin Karobyi told her aunt and cousin of Michael's arrival, must have overheard the story and communicated it to the leaders of the peasants in the town. Michael's account of the reason which had brought him to Szentes was, therefore, very probably true, and he was absolved from the black treachery of having intentionally betrayed his comrades; but the fact of his having undoubtedly abandoned

his post was established by his own confession, and it was certainly through his negligence that the attack took place. The wound of his superior officer again, although inflicted under great provocation, was an inexcusable crime. I felt much sympathy with the man on account of the trying circumstances into which he had been thrown, but pity could not be permitted to override duty. Sentence was, therefore, pronounced; the only indulgence the court could admit being its postponement for an hour, to enable the prisoner to take leave of his relatives and prepare for death.

Szelády was placed for safe custody in a stable adjoining his father's house: a sentry being posted at the door. His mother, sister, and cousin—who, after the first shock, bore his sentence with a composure which seemed to me strangely unfeeling at the time—were to be admitted to him in succession, and after they had taken their farewell, a priest, who had been captured in the town, would administer the last rites of religion and attend him to the place of execution. The interview with his mother and sister was soon over; that with his cousin lasted longer—so long, in fact, that the priest interrupted them before it was concluded. Just before the expiration of the hour, the priest came to me with a request from the prisoner to be permitted to see Carlin once more, but without witnesses, as he had a last message to deliver to her. Willing to afford the poor fellow whatever indulgence was in my power, I assented to his request. The priest sought Carlin, brought her to the door of the stable, and closed it upon her. Some time having passed without the return of the girl, the priest again went in to hasten the parting.

He came out presently with a very serious look, saying, "Poor souls, poor souls! It is hard for them to part. Grant them a few minutes longer. I go to comfort the bereaved mother."

He walked away. A quarter of an hour passed, and still no sign. Longer delay could not be permitted, and a corporal with a file of men were sent in to bring out the prisoner. They had scarcely entered, however, before a shout was heard within, and the corporal rushed out, exclaiming, "Treachery! Michael has escaped, and the girl, too, has disappeared!"

"Escaped!" I ejaculated. "Impossible! Surround the place, and look to the priest."

We hurried into the stable, searched it in every corner, turned over the bundles of hay and straw it contained, and even looked into the racks and mangers, but in vain. Neither Michael nor Carlin were to be found. His mother and sister, and the priest, had also mysteriously vanished, and it was evident that the repeated interviews were nothing but a device to gain time for the confederates to complete their arrangements. Though naturally annoyed at having been so thoroughly duped, I cannot say that I felt particularly sorry to be relieved from a painful duty. Had Michael remained, the sentence passed upon him must have been executed; and being persuaded that the story he had told was true, my feelings had pulled hard in one direction, while discipline and the articles of war had tugged just as vehemently in another. Michael was now, however, gone, and I was not hypocrite enough to affect much grief at his escape. The only mystery I should have been glad to solve, was, in what way his escape had been effected.

Time, however, would not allow of our devoting much pains to its discovery. News was received that the advanced guard of the prince's force had crossed the Theiss, and was now passing the wood. I gave orders for instantly evacuating Szentes, and the Lichtensteiners resumed their position at the head of the retreating army. I may here state that the passage of the river was only just effected in time. Görgei's force debouched upon the right bank as the last of our corps was still upon the bridge, and it was under a heavy fire, and with the loss of many of the engineers, that our men succeeded in detaching the pontoons, and thus depriving Görgei of the means of following us beyond the Theiss. Two days later we fell in with strong reinforcements under General Vetter, which placed us again in a position to hold our own in the next encounter.

In the year '55, long after I had forgotten the mysterious escape of Michael Szelády, I was again on campaign with my regiment. This time, however, the service in which we were engaged was far less hazardous than that of attempting to subdue the revolted Hungarians. The Lichtensteiners formed part of the corps d'armée under Count Caronini, sent by Austria to occupy Moldavia and Wallachia, the Danubian Principalities, during the Crimean war. Except an occasional brush with some turbulent villagers, we saw little actual service; and yet it was during one of these small expeditions that the mystery which had hitherto involved the events I have just detailed was cleared up.

Intelligence had been received at Bucharest that the inhabitants of a Moldavian village had risen against a company of Croat infantry quartered on them, owing to some offence given, I fear, by our men. The Moldavians had besieged the barracks, set them on fire, and slaughtered every man spared by the flames. Orders were given me to see to the suppression of the disturbance, and to bring the ringleaders to justice. Two squadrons of the Lichtensteiners had been considered sufficient for this purpose, and I had ridden out with my servant—a man who had attended me for many years—towards a little inn upon the frontier, where I had given the commander of the expedition rendezvous.

It happened that we had never been in this part of the country before. The inhabitants were peaceable and quiet, and our duties brought us chiefly into contact with people of a different sort. It was not singular, then, that after crossing a wide tract of hilly country, we strayed from the bridle road, and in endeavouring to regain it bewildered

ourselves so thoroughly that we had not the remotest idea in what direction it was to be sought. In this dilemma I desired my attendant to ride up to a farm-house I saw at the end of a valley we were then traversing, and inquire the way to the frontier inn. The man rode off, was absent a considerable time, and at length returned with a curious smirk on his countenance.

"I've made a strange discovery up there, colonel," he said. "An old acquaintance of your honour owns that farm-house, and a good bit of land hereabouts, he tells me."

"Indeed, Oscar," I replied. "Who is it? What is his name?"

"Michael Szelády, your honour," answered Oscar.

"Szelády! — what? — our deserter from Szentes!" I exclaimed. "Are you sure you are not mistaken?"

"Positive, colonel," returned Oscar; "and he bade me say that if you would only please to favour him with a visit, he should consider it the greatest honour that could happen to him. But here he comes."

He pointed to the farm-house, and as he spoke a stout well-dressed farmer, mounted upon a fine bay, rode towards us. Oscar was right—it really was Szelády. The ex-dragoon saluted me respectfully, and invited me very cordially to rest a few hours at his farm, promising to guide me himself afterwards to the frontier inn of which I was in search. When we arrived at the farm-house, a comely smiling woman, in whom I had little difficulty in recognising Carlin, came to meet us, with an infant in her arms, and two other urchins shyly clinging to their mother's dress. Michael presented me to his wife and children, and conducted me into his house.

After an excellent dinner, succeeded by some capital wine and cigars, I requested Michael to tell me by what means he and Carlin had succeeded in making their escape from the stable at Szentes. I assured him that he might confide in me without fear. Although an Austrian army occupied the country, he was now beneath the protection of the Turkish flag, and I should not demand his extradition.

"I am sure of that, colonel," returned Michael. "I didn't serve three years among the Lichtensteiners without learning the difference between an officer and a gentleman, and a scoundrel who betrays poor wretches for the price of blood. If I had not felt easy upon that score I should never have made myself known to Oscar there, whom I recognised as an old comrade the moment he rode up.

"You ask how Carlin and I made our escape. Well, the fact is, we never made our escape at all, but were in the stable, or rather *under* it, all the time you were searching for us. You may well look surprised; but this is how it came about. In many of the houses in Hungarian towns—particularly those of the better class, and of ancient date—there is generally some secret place large enough to be used for purposes of concealment. In my father's house at Szentes, there was a chamber situated beneath the stable, filled with piles of brushwood and fagots, and communicating with one of the stalls by a trap-door, artfully let into the floor behind one of the partitions. The thing was so cleverly arranged, that you might have looked long without finding it even if you had known of its existence, but in the hurry and surprise which must have followed our unexpected disappearance, it was almost certain to elude discovery.

"My mother told me about this place when she visited me in the stable, but our great difficulty was to find an opportunity of raising the trap, secure from intrusion, and to restore it, after leaving, to its old position. For this purpose the priest, an old friend of my father, laid the little plot of reintroducing Carlin, and then after a bit coming back to see if our interview was finished. At his second visit he replaced the trap behind the partition, swept the earth and litter back over the spot, and made the best of his way out of the town with my mother and sister.

"Carlin and I waited below until the troops had quitted Szentes, and did not venture to leave our concealment until we found the town in Görgei's possession. We agreed that Hungary, henceforth, was no place for me. My mother collected her property, and we came over to Moldavia, where I purchased this farm and married Carlin. We live here happily and in comfort, and are very prosperous; and here we hope, if Providence will, to pass the remainder of our days."

I repeated my assurance to Michael that I should do nothing to disturb his happiness, and cautioned Oscar to be careful not to let fall any hints among his comrades. My caution was probably superfluous, as I judged from Oscar's significant grin in reply, that Michael had already adopted means to ensure his silence. Still, he promised inviolable secrecy, and he will be the more likely to keep his promise, as when I last heard of him he, too, had passed under the sceptre of the Sultan, having married Michael's sister, and settled as a horse-breeder near his brother-in-law, among the Moldavian hills.

GOING TO THE PLAY WITH SHAKESPEARE.

Now that the theatres are alive with holiday fun and glitter, and going to the play is every wise man's business, why shouldn't we ask what going to the play was like when Shakespeare himself was alive?

In some respects, we manage things more easily than our Elizabethan forefathers. We have not, at night, to lay our heads on wooden bolsters, and our bodies on pallets of straw; or to cluster, when the snow falls, round log fires where the wind rumbles down great vaults of chimneys. But they were great things that were done by people who lived so uncomfortably, and fair representatives of the outward

littleness and inward greatness of old London, were the Shakespearean playhouses and their fittings. Playhouse history begins with Shakespeare, he being already twelve years old when our first known theatre was built. Long before that day plays, of one sort or another, had been acted, as miracle-plays and religious mysteries, with priests or church-boys for actors. These were performed either within consecrated walls, or on temporary stages set up, in holiday-time, at street-corners. After the Reformation, it came to be thought that secular plays were less innocent and more interesting. At last, regular comedies and tragedies were written, to be acted at court by noblemen and their retainers, and in the market-places by a class of amateurs represented, as well as caricatured, by Bottom the weaver, Snug the joiner, and Flute the bellows-mender.

It was fashionable for every nobleman to have his own body of players, and often, if he had himself any brains at all, to write the pieces they performed. Lord Buckhurst's Gorbodue, or Ferrex and Ponex, is remembered as the oldest regular tragedy in our language. And tragedy it is, with its kill, kill, kill. Ferrex and Ponex, two sons of King Gorbodue, having the kingdom divided between them by their father, come to blows. The younger kills the elder. The mother, for revenge, kills the younger. The people rebel and kill father and mother. The nobility unite and kill the rebels. After which they quarrel over succession to the vacant throne, and so kill one another. The Earl of Oxford's plays have deservedly been forgotten. He has better claim to be mentioned for the company of players he employed. The players of my Lord of Leicester's were the most famous. The king of courtiers would be outdone by no one. Wisely abstaining from authorship on his own account, he procured the best plays, and assigned them to the best actors that money could engage. His sovereign preferred this company; so that its members came to be known distinctively as the Queen's Players; James Burbage, father of Shakespeare's friend, Richard Burbage, having been one of the number. Richard Langham was another. They acted several new plays every year, and, after her majesty had enjoyed the first hearing, it was common for them to lodge themselves in some hired room, or oftener in some suitable yard; and there, day after day, to repeat their performance for the entertainment of the public.

In this way the true theatre began; but its progress might have been slow if a little wholesome persecution had not been administered. A notable feud arose. The Queen and court thought it no sin, after decent church-going in the forenoon, to close their Sundays with hearing of a play, and anxious for the amusement of the humbler classes, they encouraged among them the same habit. The Puritans, on the other hand, resisted this custom as being utterly profane. "I say nothing," shouted the Reverend John Stockwood, while preaching at Paul's Cross—"I say nothing of divers other abuses which do carry away thousands and drown them in the pernicious vanities of the world. Look but upon the common plays in London and see the multitude that flocketh to them and followeth them. Behold the sumptuous theatre-houses, a continual monument of London's prodigality and folly." Then, after a fierce description of the horrors of play-acting, he connected with them the distemper which raged nearly every year, and wound up with a syllogism, perfect in all save its premises: "The cause of plagues is sin, and the cause of sin are plays; therefore, the cause of plagues are plays."

Of the same mind were the lord mayor and aldermen of London. In an elaborate document, published in 1575, they affirmed that to play in plague-time was to spread infection, and to play out of plague-time was to breed it. It was consequently ordained that the players—who, "if they were not her majesty's servants, should by profession be rogues"—must perform only at weddings and private festivals, and only act in London during the very healthiest season—the test of health being that not more than fifty townspeople a week had died in the three weeks previous to the performance. They were never to act on the Sabbath, never on holidays until after evening prayers; the performance never must be offered at such times "but as any of the auditory may return to their dwellings in London before sunset, or, at least, before it be dark."

That was as near to an entire prohibition as loyal citizens could venture upon in the teeth of the Queen. So the players grumbled, and the people quizzed the aldermen, singing:

> They 'stablish as a rule
> No one shall play the fool
> But they, a worthy school!
> Without a pipe and tabour
> They only mean to labour
> To teach each ox-hide neighbour.
> This is the cause and reason,
> At every time and season,
> That plays are worse than treason.

Thus shut out of the city the players gave up the old plan of desultory acting at any chance place and began to set up, not exactly the "sumptuous theatre-houses" of which Stockwood preached, but substantial and permanent buildings in the outskirts. Within the very next year, 1576, at least three were finished. One called emphatically The Theatre, and therefore, probably, the earliest, and another, known as The Curtain, were in Shoreditch. A third, named from its locality The Blackfriars, was constructed by James Burbage, almost on the site of the old monastery. Against all the opposition, and partly because of it, these playhouses flourished amazingly. In later years at least three more were built—the Newington Theatre, The Rose, and The Hope.

But the Blackfriars was Shakespeare's first playhouse. Thither it is pretty certain that he came in or near the year 1586, and entered himself as a "servitore." Perhaps there is truth in the tradition that the young man of Stratford,

with Venus and Adonis in his pocket, and with not much else, began London life as a sort of representative of the man who now is so eager to call cab or carriage for anybody who comes out of the theatre with the expectation of a sixpence in the pocket. But we don't mean to speculate on Shakespeare's history outside the playhouse.

In an old list of actors Shakespeare's name stands fifth. First but one, is that of Richard Burbage, the Kemble of that day. To him the best part of every play was assigned, and his skill in acting joined to Shakespeare's power as a playwright soon filled the Blackfriars Theatre to overflowing. Two measures became needful. The old building was enlarged, and a new one erected. Peter Street, the carpenter, being set to work in 1594, The Globe Theatre, lodged in Bankside, was the speedy result of his labour. The body of which Shakespeare was the soul, and which was known sometimes as my Lord Chancellor's Company, sometimes as the Queen's, used both the houses, one in summer the other in winter.

The Globe was the first playhouse that could make any pretensions to architectural importance; and, certainly, it was small enough. It and its rival, The Fortune, in Golden-lane, Cripplegate, built five years later by my Lord Admiral's Company (till then content with the Little Curtain at Shoreditch), were constructed by the same carpenter and on the same plan, with one great difference: the Globe was round and the Fortune was square. Of the Fortune, each side measured eighty feet, and the circumference of the Globe—the Globe, for "all the world's a stage"—was about two hundred and fifty feet. The stage of each was forty-three feet wide, and projected twenty-seven feet and a half. A space of twelve feet and a half all round the remainder of the structure was taken up with boxes, galleries, tiring-rooms, and passages, so that the enclosed yard measured something like fifty-five feet by forty. The walls, moreover, fashioned not of stone, but of lath, plaster, and timber, may have been two-and-thirty feet high. Not a very imposing building for Hamlet to be represented in, with Shakespeare himself to speak the solemn address of the Ghost.

The Globe and The Fortune were public, or summer theatres; that is, they had in the centre for their pit a yard open to the sky, in which the audience had to stand, the stage being sheltered from sun and rain by an overhanging roof of thatch. The smaller and private playhouses, such as The Blackfriars and The Curtain, had a complete covering. The pit, roofed in and furnished with benches, took the place of the yard, and, as these houses were used chiefly as winter theatres, the performance was generally held by candle-light. Three o'clock appears to have been the usual time for performance to commence—a very suitable hour when people dined at eleven or twelve in the forenoon and supped at five or six.

Playhouse prices varied. One old writer talks of "the stickards in the penny gallery of a theatre yawning upon the players;" but the lowest charge could seldom have been less than twopence. The yard must have been no more aristocratic than the gallery, and twopence was often the cost of admission; but it frequently rose to sixpence in the private buildings. Yet, at best, the "groundlings" were held to be neither respectable nor wisely critical. The moneyed playgoer never mixed with them. At a charge of one or two shillings he took his seat in one of the "gentlemen's rooms," corresponding to our modern boxes. Often he hired his room for the season, and kept the key in his own pocket. Special accommodation was provided for the dandies who could afford to pay for it. They went to neither gallery, pit, nor boxes, but stood, or sat, or lounged upon the stage itself. Fitzdollrell, in Dekker's Devil, is an Ass, and gives an amusing suggestion of their motive for choosing so conspicuous a place:

> Here is a cloak cost fifty pounds, wife,
> Which I can sell for thirty, when I have seen
> All London in it, and all London has seen me.
> To-day I go to the Blackfriars Playhouse,
> Sit in the view, salute all my acquaintance,
> Rise up between the acts, let fall my cloak,
> Publish a handsome man and a rich suit,
> And that's the special end why we go thither,
> All that pretend to stand for't on the stage;
> The ladies ask, "Who's that?" for they do come
> To see us, love, as we do to see them.

It is Dekker, too, who, in his Gull's Hornbook, satirically advises that "our gallant, having paid the rent, presently advance to the throne of the stage, I mean not the lords' room, which is now but the stage's suburbs, but on the very rushes where the comedy is to dance, yea, and under the state of Cambyses himself must our feathered ostrich, like a piece of ordnance, be planted valiantly, because impudently, beating down the mews and hisses of the opposed rascality." We need not wonder at the rascality of the pit being opposed to a custom which must have seriously interfered with their own view of the performance.

For a long time there was no attempt at proper scenery. A board would be stuck conspicuously on the stage to inform the audience that the plot was laid in London, or Rome, or wherever the place might be. Or the stage directions told them what they were to fancy. When a Mussulman hero was being buried, the instruction was, "Suppose the Temple of Mahomet." When one cottager asked another to visit him, the spectators were to know that the offer was taken, and that the two were entering the cottage from the order, "Here a dog barks," and the scenic effect was left to the unseen actor who barked best. At other times there was nothing to guide the public but the inference drawn from the course of the dialogue. In Greene's Pinner of Wakefield, Jenkins challenges the shoemaker to go a mile or two and have a fight. He of the last accedes, and is eager to do battle at once: "Come, sir, will you come to the town's-end now?" Then Jenkins replies, "Ay, sir, come.

Now we are at the town's-end, what say you now?" By degrees there were introduced improvements upon these rude methods. Beds were brought in to represent bed-chambers; candles were used to betoken night-time; pictures, giving some help to the understanding of the piece, were hung up, at first without being removed from first to last, afterwards being changed to suit the progress of the story.

The poetry of a good play was made more perfect by this lack of scenery. Had it been necessary for Shakespeare to write plays whose every circumstance was to be represented to the eye, he would have had to restrict himself to incidents that could be set forth economically, and the exquisite play of his fancy must have been grievously fettered. Writing only for the ear, he could give his imagination boundless liberty, and conjure up glorious visions, which our own generation has been almost the first to see interpreted into stage shows. Again, the scene-painting to the ear fills his plays with delicious poetical suggestions of that which the poet now leaves to the paint-pot.

But the Shakespearean playhouse was not entirely without appurtenances, or contrivances for heightening effect. Here is a stage direction from Greene's Alphonsus: "Exit Venus; or, if you can conveniently, let a chain come down from the top of the stage, and draw her up." From an old inventory, dated 1598, a few entries may be extracted, showing as they do the sort of properties then common in a respectable theatre. "Item: one rock, one cage, one tomb, one hell-mouth. Item: eight lances, one pair of stairs for Phaeton [to ascend to heaven by]. Item: one golden fleece, two rackets, one bay-tree. Item: one wooden canopy, old Mahomet's head. Item: Neptune's fork and garland. Item: three timbrels, one dragon in Faustus. Item: one lion, two lions' heads, one great horse with his legs, one sackbut. Item: one frame for the beheading in Black John. Item: one caldron for the Jew. Item: four Herod's coats, three soldiers' coats, and one green gown for Marian. Item: Eve's bodice, one pendant trusser, and three dons' hats. Item: one ghost's suit, and one ghost's bodice."

Theatre properties just now are as grotesquely heterogeneous, but a thousand times more costly and elaborate. Of Shakespeare's playhouses, the Blackfriars stood for a long while, till it was fairly rotten; but the Globe was very short-lived. In 1613, while King Henry the Eighth was being performed in it, a lighted match fell upon the straw-covered floor. The flames rapidly spread to the wooden building, and it was soon burned to ashes.

NOTHING LIKE RUSSIA LEATHER.

I AM traveller for a firm which sells a good deal of agricultural machinery; and we are very busy in Southern Russia just now; for either the fine estates of the local landowners must be thrown for some years entirely out of cultivation, or machines must supply the place of hand-labour, which is not to be had at any price. The population of the fertile though unlovely provinces of the South is very scanty. The fierce wars which have desolated them for centuries have left an awful brand upon them. Notwithstanding the wealth of the soil the eye of the wayfarer aches with the weird prospect of endless desolation. They are peopled with the wild fancies and legends of the past; and are still little changed from what they were in the times when they sent forth their barbaric hordes clad in sheepskin and greased with tallow, to strike dismay into the effeminate legions of the Byzantine Emperors. For hundreds of versts, we may hurry over their windy steppes, and meet nothing but small-eyed, wiry little men, mounted on yeo-necked galloways, with uncombed hair of rusty brown floating down their backs: or now and then a string of carts, each containing little more than a wheelbarrow would, slowly and toilsomely bearing along, over almost impassable roads, the food of the civilised world to the distant seaports, where half of it arrives spoiled and unfit for use. Wheat might be sold in London at twenty shillings a quarter if there were railways in the south of Russia, so true is it that the civilization and prosperity of other countries are to the advantage of our own. Perhaps, in the course of a long day's journey also, a few spare-bearded men may be seen moving about, through many hardships and some dangers, on an errand of no small importance to themselves or to us. They are still dressed in the oldest garment known among men—the long Eastern robe; but it is here made of cloth, and is the distinctive dress of the Jews in Russia. These men, hawk-eyed, sharp featured, ringleted, garrulous, dirty, ready-witted, never at a loss under any possible circumstances, are corn-dealers; and they wander about from one estate to the other, buying up produce in corn and maize, tallow and oil-seed, at vile prices, because the helpless producers dread the risk of sending them to market.

A few other characteristic features may be added at rare intervals to the landscape. Now and then, a few camels remind one of the East. A long string of springless carriages carry the family of some Russian noble, with all his household gods—including a large metallic image of the Virgin, terrible to the knees—and provision for every accident. He is off to join the crowd of his countrymen eager for foreign travel. There, stand his carriages, drawn up disabled by the roadside, having been just pulled out of a neigbouring quagmire by oxen, and having been broken in the process. In summer, too, clouds of locusts, darkening the sun and stretching farther than the eye can see, cover the roads and fly headlong against the traveller, and attest the absence of any settled population. The few post-houses, long stages apart, often stand quite alone—not a village, not a tree, near them.

The serfs, hitherto cooped up upon the estates of their owners, have not yet been allowed to scatter themselves, but remain in their old quarters, sulky, discontented, ignorant of their posi-

tion and duties as free men. They are a source of great fear and anxiety to their late lords. They can by no means be persuaded to work, on any terms. They are too much intoxicated with their liberty, to think of anything but drink and marriage. The most marked result of emancipation, up to the present time, is a passoin for matrimony, which has seized with irresistible force upon all the adults, and has impelled them to wedlock under difficulties, as strongly as Irishmen are similarly impelled. No chance of work out of them for many a day.

Notwithstanding, therefore, the energy and attention to business of the eminent firm to which I belong, and brisk as we may be with our orders for mowing-machines and thrashing-machines, we shall hardly be able to make the supply equal to the demand. I perceive that the enlightened and pratriotic fraternity of British commercial travellers are destined shortly to work some very important changes in this country by the number and frequency of their visits. Among other things, it is humbly hoped by this writer that we may do something towards the bettering of hotel accommodation. If the reader had been with me lately, he would have hoped so too.

I arrived early in the afternoon at a straggling cluster of buildings which served for a posting-house, only a few hours' journey from one of the greatest of the Russian cities, and on one of the most frequented highways in the empire. Descending from the disjointed wheelbarrow which had conveyed me and my bruises thither, I walked into a whitewashed room, furnished with a paralytic looking-glass, and a greasy thing made of hay, fleas, and oil-cloth banged up together by main force into a knobbly mass, which looked more like a divan than anything else, though not very like that. It was intended for a bed, and there was no other to be had. There was no other furniture in the room, nothing else of any kind. We could get no horses. It appeared inevitable that we must pass the night there, and that Providence had sent an unknown delicacy to the active little inhabitants of the divan, in the person of a plump and tender Englishman.

"Was there anything to eat?" "No, there was nothing to eat." Sentiment expressed by the word "Niet," uttered impatiently in his sleep by the waiter, when he was found out by our poking at a sheepskin lolling against a post: said sheepskin having boots at one end, and the other end terminating abruptly in wool. Having delivered himself of the drowsy monosyllable above mentioned, waiter seemed to consider that his immediate object in life was fulfilled, and that it was unreasonable to hold any further communication with us.

"Was there anything to drink?" "Da" ("Yes.") Affirmative expression used by another individual while curling himself up in a corner to lie down; this person having evidently no connexion with the person in sheepskin.

Postmaster, a German, being subsequently discovered, after a long and perilous search, behind a pipe in an outhouse, is thus addressed: "Haben sie was zum essen."—I want some dinner. The language spoken among the class immediately superior to the peasantry is generally German, in the South.

Postmaster, personally appealed to, continues to smoke, as if the demand in no way concerns him. It is repeated, and then reiterated with increasing energy. Postmaster thus finding the tranquillity of his rest disturbed, rises and walks into the house with a deprecatory snort. I follow him, and we go together into the room where the paralytic looking-glass, the divan, and its eager inhabitants await us. Postmaster gets a tumbler by some means out of a queer chink in the whitewashed wall, and then apparently, urged at last to perform the rights of hospitality, passes through a door, which I innocently suppose leads to a kitchen. An hour afterwards that postmaster is found in exactly the same place where we first saw him, having given no further thought to us whatever.

Two things rolled up in sheepskins being seen tumbling about outside the door, and trying to cuff each other in some uncouth sort of play, are discovered to belong to the establishment, and to be a young man and woman making love after the custom of their class and country. Young woman having ducked her head rather too suddenly to escape a clout heavy enough to stagger an ox, brings that head, much tousled and otherwise discomposed, against a post, which tells how far we are from Kiev. Thus sobered, the young woman may be addressed with advantage. Her hair is of the colour and appearance of old tow; it does not seem ever to have been combed; her features are kneaded up together; her mouth and nostrils have neither shape nor make; they are simply round holes in a face of brick-dust colour. Her eyes look like gooseberries, and have no visible lashes, but shine as if they had been polished.

Her swain having gone off to sit on a neighbouring stone, this young woman is pathetically interrogated as to the chances of dinner. Young women are proverbially compassionate, but nothing can be got out of this young woman. She stands looking at us until she has recovered the concussion of the brain which she must have received by bringing her head full butt against that post, and then rolls off to Ivan Ivanovich and begins thumping at him again.

At length, a man who has roused himself to do something to the stove, is caught by self and fellow travellers, and his way back to his corner being resolutely cut off and blockaded, is brought to a parley. His intelligence having been quickened with a ten-copeck piece, he ultimately brings us a semovar full of hot water, and this is all we can get, or are likely to get, until twelve o'clock next day, when perhaps, if we look very sharp, we might get some tschee, or cabbage-soup.

But were not those horses—of course they were—quietly being put to a traveller's carriage, who arrived only half an hour ago, made himself some tea from a supply of that dainty which he

took out of a carpet bag, and is now about to proceed, warm and comfortable, upon his journey again? He is a shrewd composed little man—a gentleman evidently. I try to find out his secret, and, knowing that there is but one way to address anybody in Russia, approach him with my best smile, cap in hand. I congratulate him on being able to proceed so quickly on his journey, and mention that I have already been here some hours and see no chance of getting on to-night.

Traveller smiles politely. There is no more courteous gentleman in the world than your travelled Russian.

Have I been long in Russia?

Some weeks. Travelling for the firm of Watt and Co., agricultural machine makers.

Travelled Russian gentleman pricks up his ears. He has some estates in the neighbourhood, and has just returned from Paris to look at them, and put his emancipated serfs in order. Will I accept a seat in his carriage to the next station? His servant can bring on my luggage in the paracladnoi—little wooden truck like that of an English greengrocer in a very small way of business.

But there are no horses, I object irresolutely, noticing something wonderfuly like a sandwich-box and a flask, which may contain comfortable drink, through the half-open door of the carriage.

"My servant will find horses," answers my new acquaintance rather dryly.

I doubt it—I was about to answer, as politely as incredulity and a sense of injury would allow me—when the servant actually appeared with the horses wanted — three knock-kneed hobbling little nondescripts, not unlike clothes-horses, but wild scamperers when they warm to their work. They came from an outhouse, which I had altogether overlooked in my explorings, and, indeed, it was out of sight of the other buildings. More surprising still, there were the postmaster and his pipe bobbing about quite briskly hither and thither. There was the stolid waiter against the post, and the curled-up waiter in the corner quite awake. The whole establishment, indeed, looked brisk and lively.

"A nobleman of your rank," said I, "can make light of difficulties insuperable to other men." I began to think my acquaintance must be Hetman of the Cossacks, at least.

"Pardon," said he, "I have no rank at all. I am not 'au service.'"

Now I had been told to bore a hole in a five-franc piece, and put it on a red ribbon round my neck when travelling in Russia, as a thing certain to strike awe and respect into the hearts of postmasters, whom I was informed would then take me for an officer of high military rank; no other persons but officers of high military rank having a chance of comfortable travel in Russia. I had followed this advice at great inconvenience, the five-franc piece constantly jobbing at my neck and chest owing to the jolting of the paracladnoi; but, nevertheless, I firmly believed in its efficacy. I had, therefore, without inquiry, set my new acquaintance down at once as an officer of high military rank, and his remark took me rather by surprise. The British bagman, however, is not easily disconcerted, so I continued blandly:

"Well known on the road, I suppose?"

"I travel it about once in three years," he answered, with a slight shrug. "It hardly invites a better acquaintance."

"What, then, is your secret of getting horses which were denied to me and half a dozen other persons while I was staying at the post house? Is it," I gently insinuated, "'the stick?'"

My new acquaintance pulled out a twenty-five copeck-piece, something less than a franc in value.

"I give one of them to the postboy at every station, and another to the first person I meet about the post-house, for sometimes the postmaster will not accept it himself. Ce n'est pas plus fin que cela. That is all—that is all. There has been a great change in Russia since the late emperor's death; that change is growing greater every day. Ignorance, extortion, and petty tricks, exist among our peasantry as among the uneducated people of all countries, but the time is gone by in Russia when a quiet man, with money in his pocket, cannot get on as well here as anywhere else in the world. The fear of the stick, and the awe of tinsel stars, have both passed away from us. Passports, one of the last remains of the old system, are disappearing, and, far from being the obstinately retrograde people we appeared a few years ago, the only doubt in some minds is, whether we are not going ahead rather too fast. You must not, of course, expect to find the signs of the great change which has come over us very strikingly exemplified in a village post-house farther from the capital than the Landes are from Paris, or Connaught from London. But the change is here, and woe to the silly students and idle mischief-makers from other countries, who, by their insane outbreaks, try to scare our excellent and liberal-minded emperor from persevering in the noble course he has hitherto pursued towards his people."

I found the contents of my instructive friend's flask and sandwich-box excellent, and I and my following arrived at Kiev quite merrily.

At the completion, in March, of
SIR EDWARD BULWER LYTTON'S NEW WORK,
A STRANGE STORY,
Will be commenced
A NEW NOVEL, BY MR. WILKIE COLLINS.

Now Ready, price Fourpence,
TOM TIDDLER'S GROUND.
FORMING THE
EXTRA DOUBLE NUMBER
FOR CHRISTMAS.

The right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND *is reserved by the Authors.*

Published at the Office, No. 26, Wellington Street, Strand. Printed by C. WHITING, Beaufort House, Strand.